DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 129 030 EC 091 330

TITLE	Parents Anonymous Chairperson-Sponsor Manual.
INSTITUTION	Parents Anonymous, Inc., Redondo Beach, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Child Development (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	75
GRANT	90-C-104
NOTE	47p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Parents Anonymous, 2810 Artesia Boulevard, Redondo Beach, California 90278 ($4.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Abuse; Exceptional Child Education; Helping Relationship; *Leaders Guides; Manuals; *Parent Associations; *Parent Counseling; *Social Workers
IDENTIFIERS	Neglected Children; *Parents Anonymous

ABSTRACT

Presented is a manual which focuses on the Chairperson-Sponsor relationship of Parents Anonymous (PA), an organization for helping parents with child abuse problems. Brief sections cover the following topics: Jolly and Leonard (the cases of two people, one an abusive mother and the other a psychiatric social worker, involved in PA); the basic model of PA; background of the PA parent; the Chairperson's role in group; the Chairperson as parent member; the PA sponsor; the Department of Public Welfare social worker as a sponsor; PA group activities; the first meeting; alternatives to abuse; crisis calls; touching and laughter; progress; verbalizing needs; sexual abuse; problem areas; the passive parent; the group leader's relationship to agencies and professionals; the PA volunteer; chapter maintenance; statement on federal and state tax status; and additional areas of service and activity. Also provided is an application form for becoming a PA volunteer. (SBH)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED129030

PARENTS ANONYMOUS

Identification – Treatment – Prevention of Child Abuse

CHAIRPERSON – SPONSOR MANUAL

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Leonard L. Lieber
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

All photos that appear in this manual were taken by P. A. Staff Photographer, Michael Shea

EC091330

Copyright © 1975
PARENTS ANONYMOUS, INC.

NATIONAL OFFICE
2810 Artesia Boulevard
Redondo Beach, California 90278
Phone: (213) 371-3501

Toll Free Numbers:
Outside California – 1-800-421-0353
California – 1-800-352-0386

This project was supported in part by Grant No. 90-C-104 from the Office of Child Development.

For purposes of clarity the personal pronoun "he" is used throughout to signify both men and women.

THE WIZARD OF ID

by Brant parker and Johnny hart

I'VE MADE SOME CHANGES IN YOUR SPEECH
...YOU MUST SAY "CHAIRPERSON," NOT CHAIRMAN...
...AND "COMMITTEE PERSON," NOT COMMITTEEMAN... AND ALWAYS USE THE WORD "PERSON" OR "PEOPLE," NEVER "MAN" OR "WOMAN."
...FELLOW HOMO SAPIENS...

Wizard of Id cartoon by permission of John Hart, and Field Enterprises, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. FOREWORD

II. JOLLY & LEONARD 1

III. P. A. – THE BASIC MODEL 2

IV. BACKGROUND OF THE P. A. PARENT 3

V. THE CHAIRPERSON'S ROLE IN GROUP 8

VI. THE CHAIRPERSON AS PARENT MEMBER 9

VII. THE P. A. SPONSOR 9

VIII. SPECIAL NOTE TO THE DPW WORKER WHO BECOMES A SPONSOR 11

IX. WHAT HAPPENS IN A P. A. GROUP 11

X. THE FIRST MEETING 13

XI. ALTERNATIVES TO ABUSE 15

XII. CRISIS CALLS 16

XIII. TOUCHING AND LAUGHTER 17

XIV. PROGRESS 17

XV. VERBALIZING NEEDS 18

XVI. SEXUAL ABUSE 19

XVII. PROBLEM AREAS 21

XVIII. THE PASSIVE PARENT 27

XIX. THE GROUP LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONALS 29

XX. THE P. A. BUDDY 31

XXI. MAINTAINING THE CHAPTER 36

XXII. STATEMENT ON FEDERAL AND STATE TAX STATUS 37

XXIII. ADDITIONAL AREAS OF SERVICE AND ACTIVITY 38

FOREWORD

This manual is a synthesis of the feelings, understanding, and experiences of many people, When it became my task to put the manual together, I decided that the best way to proceed was to go to the people who are on the front line to find out what they had learned as group leaders in Parents Anonymous (PA). An invitation went out to all Los Angeles area Chairpersons and Sponsors to participate in three workshops. The information they supplied, together with a great deal of input from Jolly and Leonard, plus my two years background as a P. A. Chairperson forms the basis for what follows. Once the manual was in rough draft form another invitation was issued to Chairpersons and Sponsors to serve on an editorial committee. Their suggestions, additions and revisions were incorporated, and this manual is the result.

It is my sincere hope that you will find this manual helpful to you in working with P. A. parents. I am keenly aware that it is only a beginning, that there is room for much improvement as well as for further insight and learning. I hope that those of you who use this manual will feel that you are a part of that learning process and that you will share your insights with us as they come to you. In this way the manual can be expanded and improved in the years ahead.

Putting this together was a labor of love for me – labor because it was hard work, and love because it is a tangible expression of much of what I have learned and been given through the P. A. experience.

Margot

JOLLY & LEONARD

JOLLY & LEONARD

The story of Parents Anonymous is essentially the story of two human beings' struggle to understand and give to each other.

When Jolly and Leonard met they were both at a crisis point in their lives. The damaging effects of Jolly's childhood – 38 foster homes and institutions in 18 years – had sown in her an anger and self-hate that were on the verge of destroying both her and her child. The fact that she had the strength left to seek help is in itself a kind of miracle.

Leonard, in the process of divorce and experiencing the self-doubts and sense of isolation and loneliness that divorce creates, was also faced with the problem of a career choice that would give him work he cared to do. He had tried law school and found it lacking. He returned to social work and was employed as a psychiatric social worker at a mental health clinic when he and Jolly met. Here, too, something was missing for him in the prescribed therapist-patient relationship. Leonard needed something more intense and creative, and Jolly provided it.

In talking to him about his early interest in Jolly, it becomes clear that part of the challenge was his recognition of her inherent intellectual gifts. At a deeper level was her intense need for love and nurturing, and Leonard's willingness to be needed in that way.

Mothers Anonymous, (M. A.), was then not planned or organized with the thought that a new social movement to ameliorate the problem of child abuse would result. It simply grew out of the needs of two people to establish a meaningful relationship with each other.

The relationship between Jolly and Leonard forms the basic model of the Chairperson-Sponsor interaction. While it is unlikely that the intensity of involvement between the two of them will ever again be duplicated in P. A., it is a goal we strive for. Leonard provided Jolly with something she had never had and desperately needed if she was to survive; an all-giving, all-caring surrogate parent who was there – always there – at any time of night or day. In doing this for her, Leonard began to narrow the deficit created by Jolly's childhood. As she began to experience herself as cared for, it became possible for her to give to others, and the first chapter of Mothers Anonymous provided her with an ongoing opportunity to try her skills as a nurturing, giving person.

All was not sweetness and light, however. The residual of anger and inner hurt, which she carried with her into adult life often made things difficult for Jolly. The enormous sense of power she conveys, coupled with her need to control, made her appear threatening to others – both parents and professionals with whom she came into contact. Leonard served as the buffer in these battles – always supportive, never censuring, reassuring her and when necessary confronting her with her behavior and patiently helping her to come to grips with the dynamics of how she affected others. It was not an easy struggle. It sapped Leonard's strength and energy to a point where he had to withdraw from active leadership of Parents Anonymous. Significantly, he never withdrew his support from her.

From the beginning, and out of recognition of Jolly's needs, Leonard knew that M. A. - P. A. had to be Jolly's. He therefore kept himself and his contribution to the program very much in the background. This posture allowed Jolly to receive the focus of public attention and forced her to grow in skill and competence.

Those who watched Jolly make the key-note address to P. A.'s first national conference, in Feb., 1975, on child abuse saw before them a self-posessed, beautiful woman, comfortable in her role as director of a national program and secure in herself as a person. For those of us who have been afforded the opportunity of knowing both Jolly and Leonard from the early years, the experience was a moving one, for we know that it was a struggle for both of them as well as a victory.

P. A. – THE BASIC MODEL

To understand what P. A. is all about, it helps to understand the nature of the relationship between the two people who began P. A. . . . Leonard and Jolly.

The relationship between Chairperson and Sponsor is primary to what goes on in the chapter. It might seem that, with his clinical training and experience, what Leonard did was to train Jolly to be a group leader. In a sense he did do that, but he did it by not seeming to. This might not appear to make sense on the surface, but essentially this is what we are asking of our Sponsors.

Leonard's approach was to maintain a very low profile in chapter meetings – to let Jolly conduct them in her own way. His interventions consisted mainly of being honest with his own feelings and of helping parents to get in touch with their feelings, and he kept those interventions to a minimum. He made a conscious effort in chapter meetings to relate in a "feeling", as opposed to an intellectual way, to what was going on.

Leonard's relationship to Jolly had an even more important aspect. He extended to her his commitment and involved support outside of chapter meeting. In talking to her about that early relationship, Jolly said, "I think the most important thing was that he believed in me – he believed in me". Not that Leonard asked her to change, to be different than she was, to follow his model. He supported her, within the chapter and outside of it, and she turned to him often seeking reassurance. In the beginning, she says, she used to call him several times a day, and sometimes at night, often only wanting to know, "Did I do okay?" This is the kind of caring and commitment that we ask our Sponsors to give their Chairpeople.

It is important to recognize that for the untrained parent, and especially one with abuse problems, assuming responsibility for leadership of a chapter can be a very scary thing. It will take time and a lot of support for most Chairpeople to feel comfortable with their leadership role. Without the support, concern and commitment of a really caring Sponsor, most of our Chairpeople would not make it.

If the relationship between Jolly and Leonard had not exceeded and transcended the traditional patient-therapist relationship, P. A. would never have gotten started. Leonard took a big risk. He went way out on a limb and sustained a lot of criticism from his peers and colleagues because he allowed a parent with child abuse problems to assume responsibility for the active leadership of a parent group. At the time he did this, it was professionally a very risky thing to do.

We are asking the same thing of our Sponsors – that you set aside your traditional professional role – that you involve yourself intensely in caring about another human being. By giving the Chairperson the nurturing they lacked as children you will provide them with an environment in which they can grow. As they grow and begin to feel comfortable in their role of responsibility and leadership, other parent members will grow with them. One of the most important things we offer parents in P. A. is an active role model of a parent like themselves, another human being who shares their same problem, who can begin to become a self-fulfilling, caring human being.

THE P. A. MODEL IN RELATION TO P. A. PARENTS

P. A. became for Jolly her first positive, nurturing family. Within the circle of warmth and caring that emerged from those early chapter experiences, Jolly developed new skills of parenting and relating to others in positive ways. The constant demands made on her by those first parents helped her to define her own role as a parent, and Leonard's support of her became in effect, that of a supportive grand-parent surrogate. This concept of the chapter as a family unit, with the Chairperson as parent surrogate to chapter members, and the Sponsor assuming the grand-parent surrogate role, continues to this day.

For many of our parents the chapter does indeed become a surrogate family. The basic philosophy of unconditional acceptance of the parents as they are, as worthwhile individuals in and of themselves, is indeed the kind of acceptance that children need for good nurturing and growth. All the basic human issues that children experience in a family situation also pertain to the chapter experience, i. e., sibling rivalry, competition for the focus of attention and concern of the parent, the need for approval; the experience of a safe, supportive environment in which they can test their skills and strengths; an environment in which it is safe to fail; the security of knowing that they are among people with whom it is safe to be themselves and express ugly, angry feelings without fear of rejection.

This atmosphere of what Carl Rogers describes as "unconditional positive regard" is one that many P. A. parents are experiencing for the first time in their lives. In P. A. they get into the process of working through the 'unfinished business' of emotionally impoverished childhoods. They are in effect learning to give and receive at 20, 30, or 40, what they were deprived of at 2, 3 and 4, until eventually they become strong enough to extend their sense of security to the larger world.

BACKGROUND OF THE P. A. PARENT

Parents with abuse problems may have many different personalities, but they also have certain common threads running through their lives.

Almost universally our parents were abused themselves as children. It is important to recognize, however, that a person need not have been physically abused in order to become a physical abuser themselves as a parent. Emotional abuse and deprivation can be, and is, as damaging to the human psyche as physical abuse.

The abuse our parents sustained as children has in effect taught them that they are unloved and unlovable, and this results in a very low sense of self esteem and self confidence. This sense of themselves as unworthy of love is usually coupled with a sense of helplessness and powerlessness; helplessness in relation to changing themselves and powerlessness to change their environment and their lives for the better. Our parents react to real or imagined interpersonal threat with a feeling of panic and their typical response is to withdraw from persons and situations which frighten them. Their panic is either released in anger towards an inappropriate target, their children, or suppressed and added to their storehouse of unexpressed fears. This creates a cycle of threat-then-fear reaction which our parents internalize and carry with them into adult life. As adults, they tend to become reactors rather than actors, responding to life situations and significant relationships out of a fear of punishment and the loss of love.

For our parents the abuse they sustained as children has created a basic insecurity and anxiety in them. The irrationality of their parents' anger has conveyed to them a sense that their parents were unreliable and untrustworthy because their responses to him as a person did not make sense to him. At a time when his own personality was forming through interaction with his parents he was learning, a) that he was a 'bad person' and, b) that people can't be trusted. He also learned that he, himself, was a small, weak, dependent, powerless figure who had no control of his environment. Typically children will respond to such an emotional climate in one of two ways – they will become passive and manipulative, or aggressive and manipulative. In either case, their basic lack of self-esteem and their inability to trust others will program them to behave in ways as adults which, to emotionally healthy individuals, will seem either anti-social or hostile. As adults, these parents often become emotional isolates and carry with them a load of anger that is historical in origin but crippling to them in the here and now.

The abused child usually grows up to be an adult conditioned to being and feeling abused, and to creating an emotional climate for himself which fulfills his expectations. If parents can be helped in the interactive process of the chapter meeting to see the ways in which they set themselves up to be rejected by others, they can begin to recognize the ways in which they do it 'on the outside'. Part of the therapeutic experience of P. A. is for our members to discover that in spite of their rejecting behavior they are accepted and liked for themselves. The acceptance that parents find in chapter meetings makes it possible for them to begin the process of re-learning ways of relating to others that will not result in their rejection. As parents begin to relate to others more positively, as well as to have others respond to them more positively, their self-esteem rises and some of the old anguish and distrust is dissipated. If parents can be helped to get in touch with some of the historical material which is the source of their underlying anger they can begin to leave the past behind them so that they are free to respond in the here and now.

With the forms of abuse which result in death or critical injury to the very young child, there is usually involved an extreme element of self-punishment. The more nearly new a human life is, the more it seems to be an extension of ourselves, and the more closely we identify with it. For the parent with intense feelings of self-hate the expression of those feelings towards a being who, in a sense, appears to be an extension of self, becomes an extreme form of self-punishment – "I am punishing that which is unacceptable in myself."

Sometimes the parent projects onto the child characteristics or qualities of the other parent, and these projections can be the key factor in abuse. Mothers are often heard to make remarks like, "He's just like his father." This is followed by a lengthy discussion on just how 'bad' the father was or is, and it is obvious that the mother is abusing the father she perceives in the child. In addition, the anger she feels towards the father for failing her in their relationship is scapegoated onto the child.

Such parents need help in discovering the ways in which they project their 'bad selves' onto their child as the 'bad' characteristics of the other parent. If they can be helped to experience their child as separate and distinct, an individual in his own right with his own personality and qualities, they may free themselves from these projections which result in abuse.

Another dimension of abuse is the fact that when parents abuse they almost invariably follow the abuse episode with an intense effort to make up to the child for their abusive behavior. In effect, this conditions the child to the expectation that abuse will be followed by an outpouring of love and concern on the part of the parent. This outpouring may be the most intense closeness the child experiences in his relationship with the parent. This may account for the distressing fact that children whose parents are making a concerted effort to stop abusive behavior will goad the parent into abusing. The child may well believe that when the abuse stops the love and closeness will stop as well. The emotionally needy child whose parent(s) are attempting to stop abusive behavior will need a great deal of reassurance from the parent that the cessation of abuse does not mean the end of loving closeness.

When this is carried to its logical conclusion, it also means that the abused child will grow up to be an adult who needs abuse in his life to reassure himself that he is loved. Parents who permit their spouse to verbally or physically abuse them will often describe how loving the spouse is after such an episode. These parents will need help to see the ways in which they set themselves up to be abused by their spouse in order to get the love and attention they crave. They will also need help in the area of tuning in to their own needs, verbalizing these needs and getting them met in adult ways.

The literature on abuse often notes that one child will be singled out for abuse, and while this may be true, it is not the whole picture.

To witness, and as often happens, to be a party to setting up an abuse situation for a sibling, can be very damaging. The effect of abuse on siblings, while not as noticeable in terms of physical abuse may be just as damaging in a psychic sense. The brother or sister who witnesses abuse to one of his siblings has a sense of helplessness and insecurity and anger which he knows must be stifled unless he wishes to receive like treatment at the hands of the parent. Siblings of an abused child will adopt self-protective behavior patterns which can get in the way of their healthy emotional functioning as adults.

Another assumption that is often made is that child abuse is usually a problem that involves one parent and one, singled out child. Parents Anonymous does not go along with this. We take the position that child abuse is a family problem, affecting the lives and function of every member of the family. In our experience when two parents are in the home and abuse is a chronic problem, both parents are contributing to the abuse. As a rule one parent will be the 'active' abuser, while the other is the 'passive' abuser. Both parents are, in fact, engaged in contributing to the abuse. It is a rare case indeed when one parent can honestly claim, total ignorance of the other parent's abuse problem. For this reason we urge both parents to attend chapter meetings so that both can be helped to see the ways in which they contribute to the pattern of abuse.

Unfortunately, many men find it more difficult to reach out for help and to admit that they have a problem. This is due, in part, to cultural conditioning which stresses qualities of strength and independence in men so that most men feel that to ask for help is a sign of weakness. This feeling is often coupled with the belief that one should solve one's own problems. A man whose wife attends P. A. will be curious both about what happens at chapter meetings and about what his wife is saying about him to others. He may be hostile and suspicious to the point where he tells his wife not to attend.

This poses a difficult problem for group leaders. To attempt to persuade the wife to come anyway may subject her to abusive behavior from her spouse. Not to make the effort may mean a bad situation in the home gets worse. If possible, and if the husband will permit it, a home call to discuss P. A. and to encourage the father's attendance may help. What fathers often want is simply to be heard. Part of their fear and anger is due to their sensing that their wife is getting help and support at chapter meetings . . . help and support they themselves desperately want. If someone in the chapter can reach out to the father and let him know that P. A. cares very much about his feelings and needs too, it may help in getting him to either attend himself or to feel less threatened about his wife's attendance. (This situation can be reversed.)

In sum, then, we are saying that abusive parents, because of their childhood conditioning, will provide themselves with an abusive relationship; and they need help in understanding this dynamic and in finding more rewarding, less punitive ways of meeting their needs, preferably as a family unit.

GENERAL PERSONALITY TRAITS

Until recently, it was a common sterotype in our society that child abusers are among other things, poor, from a racial minority, psychotic and basically cruel people.

In P. A., we have seen people from all walks of life. We have not found that child abuse is more prevalent in one group than it is in another. Agreed, financial, practical pressures can make a person tense and more susceptible to crises that might provoke abusive incidences. Some child abusers are psychotic and some are cruel, but most are not. We have found some similarities in P. A. parents which are listed below:

1. Self Negativeness: P. A. parents are the most down on themselves people that could possibly be found. We have never had a member who has had a good self-image or strong ego. Helping parents to develop self-esteem has become one of the major roles in P. A., and recognition of members' efforts are constantly reinforced. Negative and self-condemning actions are almost totally ignored as we feel that any attention given to the negative is, or can be, interpreted as reinforcement. Many times the member will not see his positive side, so it is up to other members to point the positive out and help the member start recognizing these things.

2. Immaturity: P. A. parents are people stuck at an early developmental stage where basic needs for love, trust and nurturance have not been met and they are desperately seeking ways in which to have these needs met in their adult lives. Because their emotional development has been arrested, their behavior often appears childish.

3. Not a Theory: Most parents are willing to be involved in the family surrogate relationship. Since most abusers are former victims of abuse themselves, they are still hoping they can find a "good" mother or father to make up for the abusive one they once had. This seems to heighten the benefits of the members' being responsive to a constructive parent surrogate relationship.

4. Manipulator: This personality trait follows along with immaturity and ties in with the next one. It seems that if abusing parents are given the chance to escape responsibility by manipulating someone else into doing it all for them, they will. The manipulator is usually very emotionally needy but lacking in the ability to meet his needs by direct action. Thus, the need to manipulate.

5. Attention Seekers: Parents with abuse problems want to be noticed as people who have gross needs. Their abuse problems tend to make them want to remain isolated. But at other times they will seek attention by some form of bizarre behavior – suicide attempts, constant verbalization of depression, drinking, promiscuity, over-eating, etc. They usually want others to notice them in the hope that they will see their desperate need for help.

6. Emotional Masochist: Parents with abuse problems are very good at punishing themselves. Along with the negative self-image goes the need to be punished for being so rotten. He will look for ways to prove that he is as bad as he thinks he is. Often to inflict self-punishment, he will set himself up in a relationship in which he will be rejected. This not only proves and reinforces his bad self-concept, but makes him suffer emotionally. Another common way is to attempt to do something that is way beyond his capabilities. Again, he uses his failure as self-punishment and reinforcement of his bad image of himself.

P. A. parents will typically display one or a combination of the above personality traits. In working with them, it helps to be aware of these basic categories, but avoid labeling parents, because labels are inhibiting.

Editorial Comm., Sp. Tom Addison, Frontiers' Editor, Patte Wheat.

Editorial Comm., (l-r), Chr. Lee DiNardo, Chr. Jo L., Sp. Diane Smith.

Editorial Comm. Frontiers Editor, Patte Wheat.

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editorial Comm., (l-r) Chr. Margot Fritz, Sp. Tom Addison, Chr. Lee DiNardo, Chr. Jo L.

Editorial Comm., (l-r), Chr. Jo L., Sp. Diane Smith, Sp. Tom Addison.

THE CHAIRPERSON'S ROLE IN GROUP

The Chairperson's role in the group is to function as the active leader. Initially group members will turn to the Chairperson for support, advice and occasionally discipline. Members typically will look to the Chairperson for 'the answer', and will be as dependent as the Chairperson will allow. This does two things for the members – it relieves them of the responsibility for finding their own solutions and it sets the Chairperson up as the expert, so that in case of failure it becomes 'his fault' because he didn't have the right answer.

When possible, the Chairperson should encourage members to interact with one another. This will mean that instead of the Chairperson always being ready with an answer or advice, the Chairperson should turn to another member and ask them what they think and how they feel. When this is done often enough, members will get out of the habit of focusing on the Chairperson and will begin to interact with one another without needing encouragement to do so.

The Chairperson needs to be especially sensitive to feelings and be able to realize that what members verbalize is not always what they are actually feeling. The Chairperson should work at the skill of 'hearing' with a different ear what it is a parent is feeling and should reflect that back to the parent. For example – a parent who relates an incident in which she became very angry with her husband for "rapping" her cooking in front of his mother may be well aware that she is angry with her husband, but not in touch with the real issue, which is his attack on her self-esteem, his lack of support, his lack of respect for her person. If she can get in touch with that and be helped to verbalize it to him rather than simply stewing in her anger, it may be helpful to both of them. Such incidents seem petty, but they can be; and often are; the precipitating factor in an abuse episode. Instead of being able to verbalize what she feels to her husband, the P. A. mother may well vent these feelings on her child.

In working with parents, the Chairperson must at all times make a conscious effort to 'tune in' to the member's feelings. In this way the Chairperson can avoid a judgmental or punitive attitude toward the parent. Tuning in will not always be easy . . . especially if the member is expressing angry, aggressive or hostile feelings toward the Chairperson. It is at such times that the Sponsor may need to intervene to help both the Chairperson and the member by clarifying for both what the underlying issues are.

The Chairperson, in the role as leader, becomes in fact the authority figure for the group with all that this implies in terms of the members' unresolved conflicts toward authority figures in general. He is constantly in the delicate position of juggling his peer relationship and his parent-surrogate relationship with the group members.

As a parent experiencing difficulties with his own children, the Chairperson can draw on his own experience to get in touch with the feelings his members express. The mother of a two year old who experiences intense frustration and rage toward the child for disobeying will feel a sense of relief in knowing that another human being has had that same feeling of being threatened by a child's negative behavior. If this sense of being understood precedes a mutual exploration of unrealistic parental expectations vs. the behavior norm for two year olds, the advice that is then offered can be more readily accepted by the parent member. None of us is inclined to accept advice from another when our instincts tell us the other person really doesn't understand the problem. Knowing that his feelings in relation to the child are understood at an emotional level helps the parent to accept the advice that follows . . . and being open to accepting advice is a prerequisite to using it.

As Chairperson, don't be afraid to go with your 'gut' feelings about parents and what they are expressing. You may find that your gut is a better guide to working with members than your head. If you get out on a limb, or are simply not on the right track, the parent or your Sponsor will let you know. Taking the risk in following your intuition can lead to some very profitable exchanges – for both the Chairperson and the member.

Group members should be helped to become aware of both their positive and negative feelings toward each other, and the Chairperson can be instrumental in this. By turning to a parent and simply verbalizing, "You are really feeling angry toward Betty right now, aren't you?", the Chairperson can help parents get feelings out into the open where they can be dealt with. Reinforcing the ways in which parents respond to each other positively is also very important. When the Chairperson sees one parent actively engaged in being supportive to another member, he can simply say, "It's good to see you reaching out to Bob." Parents with abuse problems are often basically very angry people for whom the open expression of warmth and affection is difficult. They have come to think of themselves as not being able to give warmth and affection and it may come as a surprise to them to realize that they are being warm and affectionate in the group context.

Parents need help in realizing that their anger is neither as risky nor as destructive as they believe. Parents with abuse problems are people who have not learned how to cope with their feelings – in any situation. They are often people who carry a load of anger and resentment with them from childhood into adult life without ever learning appropriate ways of releasing those feelings. They believe that to express their negative feelings will invariably result in their being rejected by others . . . and they are not aware that these feelings are nevertheless expressed in subtle ways that do result in their being rejected by others. The open expression of strong, unpleasant feelings toward others in group, whether toward the authority figure they both fear and love (the Chairperson and/or Sponsor) or toward another member, can be very helpful. In this way, parents learn to recognize that their anger is not nearly as destructive as they imagine. They learn that they can express these hostile feelings toward another individual without jeopardizing the relationship.

THE CHAIRPERSON AS PARENT MEMBER

In P. A. the Chairperson must be drawn from the ranks of the group. This means that the parent who assumes responsibility for active leadership of the chapter is himself a parent with abuse problems. The Chairperson-parent then, is also in need of help in working through abuse problems and it is important for the group and the Chairperson that these problems be shared with the group. If he doesn't, the members will soon feel that he doesn't have abuse problems and that therefore he is not at a peer level. This may well result in the members feeling alienated and intimidated by the Chairperson, thereby defeating the very purpose of having the Chairperson drawn from the ranks of the group.

If the Chairperson deals openly with his problems in the group, this also serves to facilitate the members' ability to identify with him so that he does not seem 'set apart' from them. This accomplishes the goal of setting an example for the group of how to come to terms with what one is experiencing and how to take risks in self-disclosure for the rewards of understanding and growth. The Chairperson then becomes a model for other parents, and as he grows, so will they.

It is felt that an effective Sponsor will help the Chairperson in this function by guiding the other members' efforts to help the Chairperson in the working-through process, and by supporting him and encouraging him to maintain his role as leader of the group. When the Chairperson is involved in a personal working-through, it may be necessary for the Sponsor to assume the role of the group leader, always recognizing that this is only a temporary state of affairs, and that when the Chairperson is ready he will resume active leadership of the group. This will usually happen within the space of the same meeting, but in a sense, the Chairperson steps aside as active leader for that period of time in which he is involved in working through his own problems.

THE P. A. SPONSOR

The Sponsor's role in P. A. is a new concept for the professional person. Essentially the Sponsor is asked to lead without seeming to do so. This is not an easy task, and one which requires the Sponsor to take a 'back

seat' in the group situation by allowing the parent-Chairperson to be the active leader of the chapter. P. A. asks that whatever the Sponsor's professional background and experience he make the commitment to the parent-as-leader model. Without this there can be no P. A. chapter. It may be therapy . . . but it's not P. A.

Historically, Sponsors in P. A. have been drawn primarily from the ranks of the social work profession. Some, however, have not had clinical training or experience. Sponsors have also been public health nurses, psychologists, child development specialists, and in some cases sensitive and understanding lay persons without any professional training whatever. P. A. is not 'locked in' to the notion that to be a good Sponsor one must have a clinical-psych background . . . but it definitely helps.

Sponsors with clinical training and experience will be in a much better position to assist the Chairperson and give him direction in the area of small-group dynamics. Their training will also make it possible for them to help their Chairperson sort through such issues as: sibling rivalry among members; rivalries for the attention and affection of both Chairperson and Sponsor; members' response to the Chairperson in his role as group leader; the handling of feelings that are too explosive for the Chairperson; how to work with parents who block and/or avoid feelings. The Sponsor's background should give him an insight into parents that can be of great help to the Chairperson, but again we caution the Sponsor not to be too directive in group. The Sponsor should share his insights with the Chairperson outside group and let the Chairperson take it from there.

In addition to his function as a professional resource to the Chairperson, the Sponsor is in a unique position to be a participant-observer of a P. A. chapter. Since the task of active leadership does not rest with him, he can keep an eye on the issues and individuals and on the group process as a whole. There will be times when the Chairperson, because of his own needs and 'blind spots' will not be able to relate to another parent. When this happens the Sponsor will need to intervene . . . again doing it in such a way that both parties in the confrontation can save face without laying blame at anyone's door.

In essence, we are asking the Sponsor to assist the Chairperson in realizing his own potential as a group leader. This means helping the Chairperson to do the best job possible in his, the Chairperson's own fashion . . . whether this would specifically be the Sponsor's 'way' or not.

Another way in which the Sponsor can be very helpful and supportive to the Chairperson is by setting limits for the Chairperson in relation to working with a difficult and/or demanding parent. Chairpeople often overextend themselves out of a great need to both love and be loved, and needy parents can and do take advantage of this fact. When the Sponsor sees this happening he can intervene and set limits for both Chairperson and parent. In addition, the Sponsor can help the parent face his manipulative behavior and reassure him that setting limits does not mean rejection.

Experience has taught us that a Sponsor must first and foremost be supportive to the Chairperson. This means that a Sponsor can expect to be involved in an intense relationship with his Chairperson and be available to him between meetings. This will be especially true in the early months of the chapter's development . . . a period of time during which the Chairperson will need a great deal of reassurance, support, individual counseling and advice. As the Chairperson grows more comfortable in his leadership role, and more secure within himself, this dependency will lessen. Initially, however, the dependency needs of the Chairperson will be great. This requires a great deal of patience on the part of the Sponsor and suggests that the Sponsor must, himself, be a pretty "pulled-together" person, capable of giving much support and warmth. The Sponsor, whatever his background, must not look at the group to meet his own social-emotional needs. A needy Sponsor will be competitive with the Chairperson for the groups' attention and affection. This is an extremely destructive situation for all concerned.

The Sponsor's support of the Chairperson will result in a relationship that is warm and close, a relationship that will draw nearer and nearer to real interdependency as the Chairperson grows and matures so that in the end each is giving to the other in a relationship of mutual support, affection and friendship.

SPECIAL NOTE TO THE D. P. W. WORKER WHO BECOMES A SPONSOR

We are finding that more and more Department of Public Welfare (DPW) social workers are offering their services to P. A. chapters as Sponsors. D. P. W. social workers are in the unique position of being able to understand, from an 'inside out' perspective, the workings of their agency in dealing with the problem of abuse. This gives them special skills in working with parents as they are able to clarify many procedures which might otherwise baffle parents. It also gives them a special empathy for what parents go through in dealing with the agency and its workers.

On the other hand, there is a drawback. P. A. parents are understandably suspicious of the agency and its representatives. This, after all, is the agency that, in most states, is in the position of filing court petitions to remove children from abusive homes. This puts the D. P. W. social worker-Sponsor in the difficult position of wearing two hats . . . one as an authority . . . one as a proposed confidant. We strongly advise Sponsors in this position to disclose to the parents in their chapter their position relative to the agency. The Sponsors also need to stress to parents that they are mindful of the need to protect parent's rights to confidentiality and privacy. Parents must believe that what they say in chapter meeting will go no further; that while with them, the Sponsor will function only in the capacity of Sponsor, and leave his D. P. W. hat elsewhere.

No Sponsor should ever be in the position of also being the parent's D. P. W. worker. If this happens, the Sponsor should request that the parent's case be transferred to the file of another worker – preferably in another unit. The Sponsor should, of course, notify the parent that he is doing this for his (the parent's) protection. The same applies to the Sponsor who might also be a D. P. W. supervisor: If the parent's case is in the file of a worker in your unit, please make arrangements to have the case transferred to another unit. In addition, the D. P. W. Sponsor should not discuss his parent's case with anyone, either inside the agency or outside of it, unless he has the parent's permission and involvement.

We feel the Sponsor should inform each new parent as he joins the chapter of his position relative to the agency, so that no parent will have the feeling of having been deceived into making disclosures in front of an agency representative . . . disclosures which could be used against the parent. Parents must feel completely comfortable in chapter meetings. Trust is basic to comfort. Without it, chapter members will not be able to relate to each other and to the group's leaders on a meaningful level.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A P. A. GROUP

What happens in any particular group will be influenced primarily by the composition of the group and the personalities, strengths and skills of the group leaders and members. Group development will tend to follow a general pattern, however.

There will be an initial phase of getting to know each other, feeling each other out in terms of position in the group, with people establishing their territories in terms of their relation to each other, to the group leaders and to the group as a whole. This first phase usually is a story-telling phase in which members will discuss at length the situations and reasons for their coming to P. A. They will, in effect, be telling 'their side' of their story – the other side will only emerge slowly as they become known in more depth to the group. What we're essentially saying here is that people tell you what they want you to hear and what they want to believe about themselves. They will say things like, "My mother never loved me – she always preferred my older brother and never gave me any time or attention." And they will say things about themselves such as, "I'm always the one who gets hurt – I'm always the good guy and end up getting stepped on."

These are views of themselves that they want to believe and want others to believe. In the first instance the fact may be true – mother may indeed have loved older brother better and skimped the member on time and affection. This has become the member's habitual way of thinking about himself in relation to his parent, however, and this makes it difficult for him to see that in relation to the here and now, he is behaving in ways that will ensure his continuing to be the 'less loved one'. He is experiencing others about whom he cares – much as he experienced his mother – without admitting the possibility that his mother was able to give him some good things, or that others can now. He is probably thriving on his unloveableness as a means of getting attention, and this can only emerge in time as his relationships in group reveal this about him. The group has the opportunity to point out the various ways in which he sets himself up to maintain this image of himself. The parent's growing ability to trust the group will make this type of self-disclosure easier as time goes on.

In the second instance, the 'true' person will also take time to emerge and will probably prove to be very little like the long-suffering, victimized person he first described himself to be. It will take many recitals of examples of how he gets stepped on for him and other group members to see that, far from being the victim, he is the aggressor . . . time and time again manipulating others into abusing him in various ways.

Since P. A. does not run closed groups, each person joining an established chapter will have to go through the story-telling phase. Following the story-telling phase, but usually overlapping it a good deal, is the advice-giving stage. In this period, group members will recount examples of current problems with important people in their lives (significant others) and other group members will give advice on how these problems can be handled. Abuse problems will be a part of this, but not the only emphasis.

In a stable group where members get to know each other well and to trust each other, a third phase develops: the nitty-gritty phase. The material discussed in group will become more intensely personal and will be dealt with in a more meaningful, less superficial way. Members will begin to be honest with each other about how they see each other. There will be less talking about situations and behavior that are external to the group and more focus on what is happening 'here and now' among group members in their relationship to each other – more 'truth telling' in terms of members' honesty with each other about how they view each other's behavior. A basic truth of the group experience is that people behave the same in-group as they do in the real world. A person who has difficulty in expressing warm, positive feelings toward members of his family will have that same difficulty in group. A person who represses anger and scapegoats it onto others in his every day life will do the same in group. These responses may be apparent immediately to other group members, but often it takes awhile to see the pattern emerge, because even in group people tend to be on their best behavior and not to want others to see their 'bad' side.

In helping members to deal specifically with their own abuse problems it is often helpful to have them define their problem and set goals for themselves as soon as possible after they join the chapter. This puts responsibility for the member's behavior and progress where it belongs – with the member. It also gives the group some guidelines by which to measure its progress. Should the member stop dealing with his abuse problem per se in chapter meetings, the group can remind the member of the reason for his attendance in P. A. and give him a gentle nudge toward realizing the goals he has set for himself.

Basically what we hope happens in group is that an experience is created for all members in which they feel 'safe' and comfortable in expressing who they really are and what they really feel. This sounds very simple . . . it's not. People find difficulty in doing just that in many situations because it implies being very much in touch with yourself and what's happening in you. For parents with abuse problems this ability to be expressive of what is really happening in them is very difficult. Their life experience has taught them that it is ne-

cessary to mask what they really feel, for fear of rejection. These lessons go back to childhood and have become so firmly ingrained that it is often extremely difficult for them to be in touch with any feeling whatever beyond a generalized feeling of anger and/or depression, the source of which is unknown to them.

What needs to be provided for such parents is an atmosphere in which they feel that their 'bad' feelings and their 'bad' self can be expressed without fear of rejection, as well as an environment that offers them positive relationships and a chance to express affection with the certainty that it will be returned. This means that the group situation is one that is accepting of any feeling a parent cares to express – that parents can have the assurance that no matter what they express about themselves, whether it be distressing or anger-provoking to other members, they themselves will always be accepted and valued as members of the group. Members learn in group that while others may have many feelings about their behavior, they themselves are always valued. This positive valuing is of paramount importance to the healthy functioning of the group. Without it parents will soon learn that there are parts of themselves that cannot be expressed and must remain hidden – because if they are expressed, they themselves will be rejected.

The single most important thing that a group must do is to create an atmosphere for parents in which they know that they are valued by others just for themselves – that they do not have to change and meet the expectations of others to be accepted and valued. This does not mean that others have to perceive them as likeable. They, in fact, may be most unlikeable, or at least have some distinctly unlikeable qualities. But they must believe that they are valued as persons, likeable or not, and that others have care and concern for them unconditionally. Without this basic given, the value of the group will be limited. Parents can be given good advice until the cows come home, but if they do not feel valued for themselves, the advice will be wasted, for basically the corrective experience of group lies in its ability to convey to the parent that he is a worthwhile person, a cared-for, cared-about, capable person.

THE FIRST MEETING

As a rule, the meeting will start in a low key, casual, informal way with small talk about anything at all – sort of an initial 'getting to know you' period.

We do not require the usual social thing of introducing people to one another for the obvious reason that parents come knowing and expecting that they may remain anonymous.

Because the parents who come to a meeting at which Jolly K. is present have probably seen her or read about her, they readily identify her as 'one of them' and this eases things a lot. This may not be so for the new Chairperson and Sponsor, so we suggest that you walk softly before launching full tilt into the subject of abuse. Parents with abuse problems do not want to be thought of solely in terms of their problem. They want, more than anything, to be seen, felt and accepted as people. They need and should be able to expect that the group leaders will be interested in the whole person, not just 'the problem'.

This doesn't mean, however, that the subject of abuse is in any way to be avoided or dismissed. That is the reason you are there, but easing into it when parents are ready is usually the best way. There are times when a particular parent in the group has such a pressing need to get right into his particular problem that the 'small talk' stage is eliminated completely. If this happens, and one parent discloses his problem early in the meeting, it is a real door opener for other parents and gets things moving immediately. But don't count on that happening.

One effective technique for opening things up at the first meeting (and one that is helpful especially if there is no Chairperson) is for parents to simply talk about their own feelings of anxiety in a new social situation,

Underlying the usual anxieties that exist for most people in any new social situation will be fears on the part of parents that P. A. may in some way be tied in with a social agency, the police, or some form of authority that will in some way threaten them. Simply verbalizing such fears can go a long way toward dispelling them and offering parents reassurance that their anonymity and their right to privacy will be respected. Also, a discussion of how it feels to enter into a new social situation can set the tone for future meetings by establishing that an open, honest exploration of feelings is behavior on which P. A. places high value. Such disclosure also facilitates a feeling of closeness among group members as they realize that they share the same feelings and are not alone in experiencing feelings which may be negative, hostile and anxious.

Even though a high premium is placed on disclosure of one's abuse problem (or any other problem of an emotional nature), we do not mean to imply that disclosure at the first meeting is in any way mandatory. On the contrary, some parents may take weeks before feeling comfortable enough in the group situation to begin to come to grips with their specific problem. A parent who is not ready to disclose should in no way be pressured to do so. Members should be allowed to progress at their own rate of speed. Eventually, however, the group will exert pressure on the member who steadfastly remains silent about his problem. As in many other group situations, pressure from other members will elicit a response more effectively than direct pressure from either the Chairperson or Sponsor. However, as group leaders, you do need to be aware of each member's participation or lack of same.

Another helpful technique to get your first meeting moving in the direction of dealing with abuse problems is to ask parents what they hope to get out of P. A. We have found that this invariably gets parents moving on their own abuse problem. This is also helpful in getting parents to set goals for themselves in relation to their behavior.

Above all, remember that parents have a need to deal with their problem or they wouldn't be there. P. A. is often the first opportunity that parents have to really talk about their abuse problem, but they come with fear and apprehension about doing so. The shame and guilt that parents feel about having an abuse problem and their fear that their disclosures may lead to loss of custody of their child (or children) makes them anticipate rejection, judgmental reactions, and punishment.

Listening – with an honest concern for parents and their feelings – will help parents feel that finally they have found a place where they can express themselves without fear of censure. At no time should they be made to feel censured, punished or rejected for what they are there to express. As group leaders, you may feel shocked, upset, threatened or angry with some parents about their behavior and/or feelings they are expressing. To let them know this in the initial meeting will be a turn-off for them, as this is exactly what many of them anticipate will happen. To the extent possible, keep an open mind about what you hear. Don't make snap judgments. Give yourself and the parent time to get to know each other. Parents with abuse problems are often very defensive and hostile people who find it hard to express warmth toward others or their need for warmth from others. They set themselves up to be rejected by others, and if they sense this in you it will only reaffirm their already low opinion of themselves.

Not all parents will fall into this mode, however. Many will be, or will seem to be, very passive, shy, or withdrawn. Such parents will need a lot of encouragement to begin to be assertive and open about their feelings. The so-called passive parent is one who has learned, usually early in life, that it doesn't pay to be assertive – he will only get knocked down in any case. His feelings of worthlessness contribute to his passivity and a kind of hopeless feeling that nobody gives a damn about what he thinks or wants, so why try. Such parents need very badly to be helped to feel that what they think does matter, what they want is possible for them. In time, they will learn to meet their needs and overcome the feeling that they are powerless to do anything for themselves.

ALTERNATIVES TO ABUSE

There is a little-known dynamic at work in the parent with abuse problems. It is an area that will some day be explored in depth because it is so central to the problem of abuse. Until we understand it better, the following general discussion will have to suffice.

What is seldom understood about abusive behavior is that it is in a very real sense a compulsion. Once the wheels are set in motion, once a parent has moved past a certain point of tolerance, there is very little that he can do to alter the course of his behavior. Completion of the act is in a sense programmed. Interrupting that programming can be very difficult. The parent with abuse problems does not know, at a gut level, that there can be any release for the tremendous tension he feels other than abusing his child. The need to seek release in a culminating act of abuse propels the parent on a trajectory that seems to be completely out of his control. Parents who physically abuse often report a sense of physical and emotional release after the episode. This is almost always followed by feelings of guilt and remorse at knowing they have caused pain to a child they love. They feel a sense of desperation, too, because they feel so powerless to change their own behavior.

If, in P. A., we can help parents identify the specific kinds of situations and feelings which lead to abuse episodes we will have begun the process of breaking through their programmed behavior to give them the tools they need to seek alternative ways of handling their anger. The specific will be as varied as the parents themselves – no two will be exactly alike. In general, it is relationships with significant others that will often trigger abuse, i. e., (mothers, fathers, spouses, step-children).

Since almost all of our parents suffer from feelings of worthlessness and very poor self-esteem, it stands to reason that when something happens in the course of their everyday lives which emphasizes these feelings, they are at risk to abuse. If we can help them identify the person, persons or situations, which trigger these negative feelings, and get them to direct their anger toward the appropriate targets, abuse episodes can be decreased or eliminated altogether.

In the meantime, we can help parents find behavior alternatives which will serve as a release for tension and anger so that they are not compelled to seek release in physical abuse of their children. The build-up of tension preceding an abuse episode can be checked if the parent recognizes, in time, that he is heading toward an episode. When he does, and when he utilizes behavior alternatives, abuse episodes can be avoided. We recommend suggesting something as physical as possible: throwing a ball against a garage door; jumping on a bed; kicking cupboards; pounding furniture; and if necessary, as it is for some parents, breaking dishes. One P. A. mother reported that for a period of time after she first joined P. A., the only thing that helped was squeezing a full milk carton until the milk hit the ceiling! Whatever works. It may be messy, it may even be costly – it's still an improvement over abusing a child. When the tension builds there are times when only a destructive act can give adequate release. When this is the case, then breaking something is justified. (But we don't recommend breaking something that makes you feel almost as guilty, such as the T. V. or an irreplaceable antique!)

Parents are encouraged to exchange phone numbers with each other, and every parent should have both the Chairperson and Sponsor's phone numbers. Experience has shown us that the telephone is a behavior alternative which parents may only be able to use when they have developed a degree of insight into their problem. In the early stages of their involvement with P. A., parents may well call only after an abuse episode has occurred. Some parents may not be able to use the phone as a behavior alternative until they have been involved in the chapter for awhile and made some progress in figuring out the dynamics of their particular problem.

CRISIS CALLS

The parent who calls in crisis is feeling any, or all, of the following: rotten about himself; guilty because he has just abused his child; helpless and hopeless; depressed; angry because his own needs are not being met in some way.

In dealing with the parent in crisis you should first of all determine, gently, if their child has been injured. Parents who know the group leaders well will almost invariably describe the abuse incident at the start of the call and it will not be necessary to press them for details. Once you have ascertained that the child is all right you can focus on the parent. However, it is inadvisable to focus on the abuse episode itself. Try if you can to determine what specific behavior of the child's triggered the abuse. Then work backwards from there to the parent's feelings prior to the abuse to help the parent discover for himself what event, or feeling, not connected with the child or his behavior, is the source of the parent's anger. You will often discover that the parent was experiencing an intense sense of his own neediness coupled with a feeling of helplessness about his ability to meet his needs in an appropriate way. At the point that his children became needy and/or demanding of him, or simply misbehaved in a way to give the parent an excuse to lash out, abuse occurred. Try to help the parent discover what his own needs are that are not being met, and then explore with him possible alternatives for meeting those needs.

When a parent is in the throes of a crisis they are feeling both intensely needy of support and intensely negative about themselves. They cannot, and sometimes will not, see alternatives, but will dwell instead, on their own worthlessness, helplessness and incompetence.

Don't let yourself get sucked into that vortex with them. Be as supportive as possible, but don't pity and don't be too sympathetic without at the same time insisting that they take a more positive view of the situation and the alternatives. Emphasize anything positive that comes to mind. The most obvious 'positive' is the fact that the parent called you. This reaching out to another is extremely important for P. A. parents as most have conditioned themselves not to reach out for support when they are experiencing something painful, but instead to withdraw into themselves, thereby reinforcing their feelings of rejection. When a parent calls in crisis they are taking a very positive step and they should be praised for doing so. If you can remember some success of the past week that the parent experienced, or something that happened in chapter meeting that could help the parent feel better – use it.

Draw on the parent's strengths and personal qualities of attractiveness and remind him of those. In short what needs to be done with the parent in crisis is to pick him up emotionally and stand him on his feet so he can function. The feelings of helplessness and worthlessness which the parent is experiencing are self destructive and every effort should be made to draw the parent away from them by helping him to feel better about himself and his situation. LAUGH if you can, and get the parent to laugh with you. If he can laugh at you or himself, or even his situation it will ease the tension for him and make life more bearable.

Needy parents are often unable to express directly what their needs are. They will call instead on some pretext which is really unrelated to what they want. For example, the parent may call and request the phone number of another chapter member, or they may inquire as to why so-and-so wasn't in chapter meeting last week. What they are really saying is: "I'm feeling low, I need support; I need to communicate with you, my surrogate parent and be reassured that you care about me." They may not be in crisis at all – just feeling down and needy. Tune in to that neediness by verbalizing for them, if they cannot do it for themselves, what they want. A simple, "Mary, are you feeling lonely?" Or, "Bob, are you missing Margaret?" to a husband whose wife has gone to visit her mother. You are in touch with the events in your parent's lives so that you are in a good position to pick up on the things that are likely to make them feel depressed, lonely or

angry. If you can help them get in touch with those feelings, express to you their need for comfort and support, and then give them the assurance that they are cared about, you will help them avoid abuse situations. In addition to meeting their needs, this approach helps parents realize what it is they need, and these needs will be better met.

TOUCHING & LAUGHTER

Touching is basic to the growth, development and nurturance of every human being. Without it infants may die. It is one of the most important aspects of the parent-child relationship.

We encourage touching in chapter meetings. When a parent experiences something painful he or she is in need of comfort and reassurance, and touching conveys this better than any other means. We consider it entirely appropriate for our group leaders to give physical comfort and reassurance to parents, or to each other if need be, during chapter meetings. Touching need not be confined to simply holding a hand, or squeezing an arm or shoulder. If a parent appears to need a bear hug, then that is what he should get.

However, spontaneity is the key to touching. If you hug a parent because you "think it should be done" rather than touching him out of genuine empathic response, your gesture will be rightly interpreted as mechanical and little good can come of it. If you genuinely want to reach out but feel awkward about touching, as many of us do, be honest about that. You might say something like, "I feel like putting my arms around you right now, but I'm so awkward with touching." Surprisingly, you may find that an honest disclosure like that will open the way to similar confessions among the parents. Many of us were brought up as "non-touchers," and talking about the problem might very well help clear the way for members to reach out to each other without "feeling foolish" or worrying about being rejected.

However it is facilitated, parents should be encouraged to reach out to each other in this way. For some of them, it may be a new experience, and the rewards the giving parent receives are easily as great as the reassurance the receiving parent gets from the experience. Learning to express warm, positive, giving feelings in the protection of the group will help our parents express these feelings in a physical way toward their children and spouses and will help to open them up.

Another "opener-upper" essential to all human interraction is laughter. Laughter can be a wonderful cleansing agent. Don't be afraid to see, and help parents see, the comical side of a situation. Laughter during a crisis call, or in a chapter meeting, can and does help lessen the tension of dealing with heavy issues. When we laugh we feel better and that after all is what P. A. is all about — feeling better.

PROGRESS

Group leaders often ask "How do we know when we're making progress with parents?" Some general guidelines are as follows:

When members report positive ways in which they have handled and avoided abuse situations with their children.

When members begin reaching out to others for help, advice and support.

When members begin socializing with other group members.

When members report improved relations with their own spouses, parents, in-laws, and significant others in their lives.

These are just a few of the significant areas of change that may occur. There are many others. Typically when parents come into chapter they are feeling, and often looking, pretty bad. In talking about their problems they will reveal the specific areas of their social-emotional functioning which cause them to have feelings of "self-loathing". As group leaders, you can pick up on the relationships in their lives which need the most improvement.

Of particular importance in the area of progress is a parent's ability to be considerate of another's needs. P. A. parents are often intensely needy when they first enter group. So much so in fact that it is almost impossible for them to be aware of another's needs and/or feelings. They will call at the most inopportune times (the period between 3 p.m. in the afternoon and dinner is statistically a high risk period in the lives of parents with abuse problems and most group leaders report the highest incidence of calls right at the dinner hour.) When a parent calls, no matter at what time of day or night, and no matter what you may be engaged in doing, it is advisable to talk to them and ascertain whether they are, in fact, in crisis or whether they simply need support. You will know that your parent is making real progress at the point that he or she can say, and mean, "If you're busy right now, I can call back – it's not that urgent." If they say this spontaneously and not as a manipulation to get you to feel sorry for them and pay attention to them, then and there, you know that they are making steps towards maturity. In sum, any indication that parents are becoming sensitive to the needs of others, in group or out, means that growth is occurring. Discussion and praise of such growth is, of course, important.

For some parents, particularly the so-called passive parent, the ability to be self-assertive in group will be a measure of their improvement. For the hostile-aggressive parent the ability to interact with others in less angry ways, to express warmth and caring toward others in the group situation will be a yardstick of their improved sense of self-esteem.

Please do not expect miraculous changes. It took our parents years to become the way they are – it may take months, and in some cases, years for improvement to be noticeable. It is our belief, however, that most parents will show measurable increases in improved self-esteem and personal functioning within a few months of joining the chapter IF their attendance is regular. One of the reasons that an evaluation of the effectiveness of the P. A. approach to the treatment of child abuse is so important is that it will give us documented evidence that P. A. does, in fact, work because parents improve in the program.

VERBALIZING NEEDS

Verbalizing felt needs is difficult for many people . . . not just P. A. parents. The mores of our society make the overt expression of felt needs a taboo in many areas. One does not say in polite society, "I need to go to the bathroom", "What you said just now makes me angry", or, "I want to be your friend." Such openness is not considered 'nice'. What we do instead is to learn at an early age that feelings and needs must be masked, must be cloaked in innuendo. This results in a lot of 'missed'messages' and misinterpretations.

For P. A. parents there is the added difficulty that they have been conditioned by their childhood experiences to anticipate that their needs will not be met. They become fearful and defensive and what results is often an inability either to readily identify their needs or to express them to another.

As group leaders, if you are sensitive to the fact that parents need help in learning to identify and verbalize their needs, you can begin to help parents realize that it is 'safe' for them to express their needs. In a chapter meeting, if you sense that a parent is responding to another chapter member in an angry, hostile fashion

because he feels rejected and wants to be liked and accepted, try to help the parent express this directly to the other person. If parents can learn, in chapter, to say, "I'm uptight because I'm afraid I'm going to fail", "I'm feeling anxious because you are not going to be here next week" (In relation to the absence of either Chairperson or Sponsor), "I'm feeling very needy and a bear hug would really help", "I'm angry with you right now because I feel like you favor Mary", it will make it easier for them to be more open about their feelings on the outside. The group experience is a special one in many ways: the openness that is possible, and encouraged in group is not always either possible or acceptable in daily life, but helping parents to be expressive of their needs in group will help them meet their needs outside of group.

SEXUAL ABUSE

NOTE: The following section on sexual abuse was written expressly for this manual by Dr. Roland Summit, Psychiatrist and Director of Community Consultation Services, Harbor General Hospital, Torrance, California. Roland has been a member of the Board of Directors of Parents Anonymous since its inception in February, 1971.

Many people, even those who have come to understand other forms of abuse, find they just can't tolerate the idea of sexual abuse to children. Anyone who admits to any kind of sexual feeling or interest relating to children is likely to be shunned and punished. P. A. groups may tend to say "That's not our problem." But it is our problem.

Many P. A. members describe memories of sexual abuse as children. Others feel guilty about sexual thoughts or activities which they are afraid to discuss in chapter meetings. If P. A. is to meet the needs of parents with abuse problems, every P. A. chapter must be willing to recognize, to understand, and to reach out to parents with a capacity for sexual abuse.

Part of the problem has been misunderstanding and prejudice. People imagine pictures of bizarre rituals, torture, or rape. They feel that children are pure and totally innocent, and they feel that only a beastly person could even think of violating that innocence. A better understanding of what sexual abuse is and how it happens will reduce some of the prejudice and open the way to understanding and help.

Sexual abuse, much like other forms of child abuse, is a frustration of love. Sex at its best and most appropriate is an expression of love in the most intimate possible setting. Everyone has a need for being held, touched and caressed, to be cared for and cherished, to be sure of being needed and very special. If people are free to experience and to express loving feelings, they will usually find someone appropriate to share those feelings. People who are frustrated and unsure of their sexual needs and feelings may seek out inappropriate partners. For adults the most intense feelings usually involve the sex organs and the more sexually sensuous areas of the body, so that every loving encounter carries with it some degree of desire to bring these areas into play. People learn through experience, tradition, and training to restrict the most specific sexual experience to the most appropriate partners and to turn off, or repress, sexual feelings where they feel sex doesn't belong.

One tradition is so practical and long-established that it has become an unquestioned taboo: never have sex with children. The strongest form of that taboo is: never have sex with your own children.

People usually assume that these taboos are natural, and that sex with children would be unnatural. Actually, the taboos have developed as a practical defense against a very natural experience: people who live to-

gether, who depend on each other for love and support, and who have intimate daily contact with each other will tend to develop sexual relationships with each other. If it weren't for the rules, sexual experimentation among family members would probably be quite an ordinary experience.

Children are not completely innocent or inexperienced in sexual feelings. They respond gladly with their whole bodies to loving contact and they have an intense curiosity to learn why their sexual organs are given such special rules. They want to be treated by their parents as something very special, and the sharing of forbidden sexual feelings can become very exciting. A parent, who encourages sexual contact may find the child curious at first, then gratified and powerfully drawn to continuing contact. Once the taboo is broken, it may become easy for a parent to find reasons to justify continuing sexual activity: 'It shows how much I love the child, how precious he or she is to me; it brings us closer together; it's a wonderful kind of sex education; it's the only really tender, pure kind of sex I can enjoy; I deserve some outlet; it doesn't really hurt anyone; there's no way out; it happens only when I'm drunk.' All these arguments are twisted and self-gratifying. Because children can be such willing partners, and because premature adult sexuality can be disasterous to the emotional development of a child, and to the survival of the family, it is the entire responsibility of the adult to protect the child from inappropriate sexual experience.

It can be very confusing sometimes to decide when a relationship is too sexualized. Parents are encouraged to show love for their children. Holding, fondling, kissing, mouth play to various parts of the body, snuggling together under the covers, all these are an important part of learning to trust and to love. Without them a parent may seem distant or too reserved and a child may grow up insecure, cold, or sexually inhibited. These same loving gestures can be called sexual abuse if they become too lingering and seductive, if they are continued too long into adolescense, or if they become centered on the sex organs, anus, breasts or other erotic areas. Far from being forcible rape, the most common forms of sexual abuse of children are gentle variations of adult lovemaking misplaced on the children of very needy, sadly love-starved parents.

Sexual activities with children are almost always destructive to the child involved, to the parents and to the family. An adult who violates the taboos and yields to sexual desire is usually acting out of a disturbing inner need which denies real satisfaction in adult sexuality and compels him, or her, towards unusual, 'kinky' sexual outlets. The conflict between compulsion and taboo wipes out any really comfortable, rewarding parent-child relationship. The child is being used to meet the conflicted needs of the adult. The child inevitably feels betrayed and the parent feels guilty and more or less deprived. Power struggles, blackmail, jealousy, guilt and fear prevent normal personal or sexual development for the child, who finds severe problems trying to relate to appropriate sexual partners later on. Discovery of the sexual relationship may result in removal of the child, imprisonment of the parent, breakup of a marriage and a lifetime of confusion, remorse and lingering, guilty desires among the people involved. Everyone suffers, and the suffering is intensified by the repulsion and rejection of all the 'decent' people who are afraid to recognize the problem as an ordinary, understandable, even natural human frailty.

It is useful to have a firm taboo to serve as a clear guideline for family sexual behavior. Most people accomodate so well to the taboo against childhood seduction that they are not even aware of the sexual potential of their love for their children. Some people, for a variety of complicated, but very human reasons, find themselves unable to conform. These people slip into more or less sexualized, more or less destructive relationships with one or more of their children. For these parents the taboo becomes a curse, taunting them to hate themselves, forcing them to hide their problem, and arming their neighbors and friends to punish them with contempt and public disgrace.

P. A. has learned to help people who feel they must hide from public disgrace. We have learned to reach out and show people that self-hate only makes problems worse. We have learned to share with each other the problems and some of the solutions to all forms of child abuse. Within the supportive circle of the P. A. chapter we can learn to understand and to help people who have trouble separating the needs and feelings of the child from those of the adult and who can't always control how those needs and feelings are expressed. Just as there is a fine line between discipline and destruction, there is an invisible border between loving and lusting. Children need parents who can tell the difference. Parents sometimes need help in understanding the difference and in finding more appropriate ways of meeting their adult sexual needs.

Because the subject of sexual abuse is often the most difficult for parents and group leaders to handle, we would like to suggest that you photo-copy the preceding section on Sexual Abuse and give it to all chapter members. The approach taken is both so understanding and compassionate that we feel it will facilitate group discussion of the subject. As with other forms of abuse, sexual abuse, either actualized or fantasized, is experienced by most parents so that every parent, if he is honest with himself, can probably relate to the problem.

PROBLEM AREAS

ATTENDANCE

Chairpersons and Sponsors repeatedly mention the problem of attendance at chapter meetings as a primary area of concern. It seems that, unlike traditional closed therapy groups, P. A. chapters have greater instability. Some of the factors which account for this are:

P. A. does not interview or 'screen' parents before placing them in chapters to ascertain whether or not they will 'fit in' to the group situation.

P. A. does not run closed groups – when a group gets too large it is simply split and a new chapter is formed. This means that new parents are constantly attending chapter meetings. Some stay to become part of the 'core group' and these core members provide stability and continuity for the chapter as time goes on.

For some parents however, constant attendance at group is an unrealistic goal. They come, they feed awhile and leave. This flexibility is at once a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that no parent is ever turned away from a chapter or hassled with interviews, forms, waiting lists, etc. It causes problems in that chapters do not as a rule have stable populations which can make building trust and confidence among members a difficult task. As a rule, most P. A. chapters function with a 'core group' of from five to seven members, and anywhere of from one to several 'floaters' – parents who come briefly, or only once. Since this seems to be the general pattern for all of our chapters it should not be of great concern unless there is a constant turnover of all group members. If this happens call your Regional Coordinator (if it is urgent, reverse the charges) and they will do their best to help you figure out what is happening.

MEMBERS' FAILURE TO DEAL WITH THEIR OWN ABUSE PROBLEMS

This seems to be a fairly common complaint among our chapters. Child abuse is a heavy and emotional subject. The tendency to avoid that which is painful is only human. When parents avoid the issue week after week it will be necessary for the group leaders to gently remind those attending of the reason for having a P. A. chapter in the first place.

Asking each member as he or she joins the chapter to define their goals relative to their abuse problem gives the group a means of pulling the member back to these goals if, in succeeding weeks, he avoids dealing specifically with his abuse problems. P. A. recognizes that there will be many problems and stresses with which parents will want to deal in chapter meeting, and this is entirely appropriate. At no time however, should the group leaders lose sight of the basic objective – strengthening and improving the parent-child relationship, and in order to do this parents must focus on the abuse episodes which occur while they are chapter members.

There is an additional factor in members' failure to deal with their abusive behavior in chapter meeting. This is the attitude of the Chairperson and Sponsor – but particularly the Sponsor. If either group leader is himself afraid of any specific abuse then this will become a 'taboo' for the group. In all probability this will be conveyed in an indirect way – no group leader would be likely to say outright, "I don't want you to talk about that." But the message may be conveyed nonetheless. If, as group leaders, you find that your members are consistently avoiding the subject of any specific abuse you must ask yourselves, "What am I feeling about that specific abuse?"

Physical and sexual abuse are the two heaviest areas to deal with in P. A. If you have a reason to suspect that either topic is being avoided in group meetings, and there is reason to believe that chapter members are involved in either form of abuse, then it becomes incumbent upon you to deal with your own feelings and to express your concern to the group. It is at such times that the Sponsor may well seek an outside professional resource to help him deal with his feelings.

It is very important for group leaders to remember that they will set the tone for chapter meetings – the group leaders' ability to be open and honest about their own feelings will serve as a model to all chapter members. By the same token – any area which the group leaders avoid will probably also be avoided by the group and this can certainly be counterproductive to the purposes of a P. A. chapter.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The American Psychiatric Association recently removed homosexuality from its lexicon of identifiable mental diseases. This was in response to a growing feeling among professionals that homosexuality is not a form of mental illness, but simply another answer to the problem of existence. Homosexuals do have children and often end up being single parents because they dissolved the heterosexual relationship which produced the child.

P. A. does not see its function in relation to homosexual parents as being one of changing or altering their homosexual needs. What we can do is what we hope to do with any parent – strengthen and support the parent-child relationship. The homosexual parent who attends P. A. is not likely to be asking the group to 'do anything' about his homosexual attitudes and/or relationships. The homosexual parent is asking what

any other P. A. parent is asking for – help with his abuse problem. We would hope that the homosexual parent will find acceptance in the P. A. chapter and that the question of his homosexuality will not be an issue – either for him or for other parents.

CONTROL OR DOMINATION OF THE GROUP BY ONE MEMBER

This seems to be a fairly common problem for our chapters. If it continues for too long it can be destructive to the chapter. If this happens in the early stages of the chapter's growth it will probably have to be handled by the Chairperson and/or Sponsor. The parent who engages in this behavior may be unaware of what he is doing and of the affect this has on those around him. If this is the case it may come as something of a shock to *him to hear it* from another. If it has gone on for a couple of chapter meetings and nobody has said anything, either the Chairperson or the Sponsor can simply say, "Have you noticed that we let June do all the talking?" This lets "June" off the hook a bit, but also opens up the way to discussion of what is going on. Other group members will follow the lead and voice their own feeling that they are not being given a chance to be heard. The attack may not be directed toward June but expressed in a more indirect way, i. e., "I was beginning to wonder if I was ever going to get a turn."

It's a pretty safe bet that the parent who behaves this way in group-controlling and dominating, is behaving this way in his personal life and generating a good deal of hostility from those around him. That hostility in turn makes him feel rejected and this sense of rejection can and does trigger abuse episodes. If he can be confronted with his behavior in group, while still having the message conveyed that he is not being rejected, that no one is trying to run him off, he may be able to alter his behavior in group, and finding acceptance there, alter it in other areas of his life.

If this happens in an older, better-established chapter where good group interaction is the order of the day, it is reasonably safe to assume that one or more group members will be able to confront the controlling member without assistance from either group leader. The latter is preferable, as parent members can accept being confronted by a peer member more readily than by either one of the group leaders. When it happens, the Chairperson and Sponsor need to be sure that they are ready to intervene, to help the dominating parent save face and deal with his own feelings which arise from the confrontation. If he can be helped to accept the fact that confronting does not mean rejecting he will have taken a step in his own growth.

SOCIALIZING OF MEMBERS OUTSIDE OF GROUP

In a way, it is odd that one of the most positive benefits of any P. A. chapter should also be a problem area. Closeness among group members, and sharing of social life outside of group are to be encouraged and fostered. However, there are drawbacks. It sometimes happens that group members 'gang up' on another member, gossiping and backbiting among themselves, or that they gang up on the group leaders because feeling of anger generated in group are not dealt within group. There is also the problem of members confiding in each other about important facts in their lives which can have direct bearing on their abuse problems, but which, for a variety of reasons, they do not wish to share with the group. When these things happen it will become the responsibility of the group leaders to raise these issues with members, in group, and deal with them in such a way that they become a part of the group process. If left untended such issues can be detrimental to the group – part of the 'hidden agenda' of thoughts and feelings which pervade chapter meetings in an insidious fashion.

At some point, group leaders should discuss the whole issue of outside socializing and get the group to form its own guidelines for handling the issues mentioned above. Group members need to realize that while they belong to a P. A. chapter, the significant events of their lives should be discussed in group – that when they withhold important information from the group they are denying themselves and other members the opportunity to really work through and understand the internal processes which are vital to their problems. This is true whether the hidden issue revolves around an event that has nothing to do with any group member or whether it involves another chapter member and that person's feelings about the member.

P. A. members should be encouraged to be as open about their thoughts and feelings and the events in their lives as possible. Without this openness the effectiveness of the group process is limited.

WHEN THE CHAIRPERSON OR SPONSOR LEAVES THE GROUP

Experience has taught us that when either the Chairperson or Sponsor leaves the group, the group is at risk in terms of its viability. The Chairperson and Sponsor are essential to the maintenance of the chapter. Removal of either is a little like death or desertion in the family. Both the Chairperson and the Sponsor need to be clearly aware of their importance to the group and, in the event that either must leave the chapter for any reason, good preparation and adequate forewarning should be made. Group members should be informed as soon as possible of an impending absence by either group leader – this is true even when the absence is only for one or two chapter meetings. Members typically will say very little about the loss of a leader, but they will be feeling plenty and they should be given time to get into these feelings.

Because many P. A. parents have felt unloved and unwanted as children, they may have difficulty expressing the closeness they feel and the sense of loss generated by the leavetaking of someone they care for. Group members should be encouraged to explore fully what the absence will mean to them – feelings of anger at being left are to be expected – the anger may serve as a cover for the deeper sense of loss. Having sustained many losses as children some parents may cover what they feel with a veneer of 'so what'. Beneath that lies all the hurt and pain of the rejected child. Helping parents to fully experience the pain of separation and caring can be a freeing and enriching experience for them. The same is true for the person doing the leaving and it is of equal importance that Chairperson or Sponsor be as open and honest in regard to their feelings.

In sum, if either Chairperson or Sponsor leave a chapter abruptly without explanation, it is not only destructive to members but will probably mean the collapse of the chapter, because the feelings of having been rejected in an irrational fashion and the need to reject in return will be overwhelming.

OVERCONTROL BY THE SPONSOR OR CHAIRPERSON

It is to be hoped that this manual has been explicit enough about the role of the Sponsor and that none of our Sponsors will suffer this particular malady. In the event that it does happen the only course is for the Chairperson and group members to confront the Sponsor. If the Sponsor acknowledges such control, but insists that it is necessary for whatever reason, a call to the Regional Coordinator will hopefully resolve the issue. Failing that, it may be necessary for the group to seek another Sponsor. In the past four years of P. A.'s growth and development, there have been only a few instances where such drastic action was necessary. In almost all instances of a conflict between Chairperson and Sponsor it has been resolved by the parties concerned talking openly about their feelings, clearing the air and getting on with the business of working cooperatively.

When it is the Chairperson who dominates the group there is a different focus. Typically the strongest chapter member will be the Chairperson. However, the Chairperson is, as a rule, still in the throes of his own abuse problems and the group experience is a learning/growing experience for him. Like other P. A. parents, the Chairperson often has a great need to be controlling of others in his environment, for only in this way can he feel 'safe'. It may take awhile and some explosions along the way for a Chairperson with this need to reach the point where he can safely 'let go' and still feel secure, realizing that leadership is not a question of control.

Working this through will be a process of maturation, however, and here the Sponsor can be instrumental in working in a one-to-one way with the Chairperson outside of group to facilitate the Chairperson's growth in this area. Here again, if the quality of closeness and caring exists between Chairperson and Sponsor, the Chairperson, secure in the confidence and trust of a strong relationship with the Sponsor, can begin to trust, to not feel threatened, to believe in his own basic worth because he is worthy in the eyes of another (the Sponsor) and the need to control and dominate will lessen. A warning to Sponsors: This may take time and patience – but 'hang in'.

The Chairperson, or for that matter the parent who verbally dominates the meeting is not only controlling others – he is also controlling the flow of communication so that feeling areas that are scary for him to deal with will be overlooked or ignored. This is a self-defeating game and the Chairperson, or parent who engages in it needs help in having his bluff called. If another parent, or the Sponsor, will confront the parent who is attempting to control the group discussion, by asking the member directly what he is feeling at that point in time it may help the parent get back on the track of dealing with the discussion in feeling, as opposed to intellectual, terms. It is interesting how often people have difficulty expressing what they feel. They will lapse into a description of what is happening, try to change the subject – in short, dodge the issue. At such times gentle insistence on relating in feeling terms is necessary. If the parent blocks completely on his feelings he can at least be made aware that this is what he is doing.

The Chairperson, or parent member, who dominates the meeting may at some point drop a verbal hint as to what is really bothering him. A father who launches into a sermon on the evils of organized religion may in fact be very upset over the fact that his wife is fanatically religious, but afraid to deal openly with his feelings about that fact. A mother who entertains the group week after week with tales of her sexual exploits, may be defending herself against the hurt she is really experiencing in those relationships. For group leaders to permit these digressions to go on uninterrupted is harmful to the group as the real task of dealing with things at a feeling level will be stopped and the whole group will suffer. If other parent members are not strong enough to confront the dominating member, and this may be especially difficult when it is the Chairperson, the Sponsor will need to intervene by pointing out to the group how feeling issues are being avoided.

THE GROUP-DESTRUCTIVE PARENT

It sometimes happens that one parent in a group will act out in ways that are counter-productive to the group as a whole. The following is an example of what we mean:

> A chapter member, whom we'll call "Stacy", became very angry at another chapter member during a meeting. Feeling that the group leaders should have taken her side in a confrontation with the other member, Stacy turned her anger on the entire group. After chapter meeting, she made rounds of the local bars, getting progressively drunker and louder. In each bar she talked openly about other members, announcing the fact that they were abusing parents and members of P. A.;

using their first and last names. When the story got back to other chapter members, the whole chapter became extremely upset and demanded of the group leaders that Stacy be banished from the chapter. This was not the first time that Stacy had found ways to undermine the chapter and members were understandably angry at her behavior.

When a member's acting-out behavior becomes detrimental to the group as a whole, it is necessary for either the entire group, or the group leaders to take action. Banishment from chapter is probably the most serious action that can be taken in regards to any member and it is to be avoided if at all possible. Instead, we suggest the following procedure:

The chapter as a whole confronts the member in question at the earliest opportunity. If the chapter truly believes that the member's continued presence in group is destructive to the group as a whole they must tell the parent this and let the parent decide whether or not they wish to remain in the group with the understanding that they are on probation and should such an incident occur again, it will result in immediate expulsion from the chapter. At this time, the parent should be offered alternative treatment resources, i. e., local mental health agency, private therapy, clergy counseling – whatever may be available in the community.

The group leaders may suggest that the parent seek another therapy resource, but continue to remain in touch with chapter members and the group leaders on the phone, or in person if they wish, until such time as they, and the group, feel that he is ready to return.

The group leaders may suggest that the parent drop out of the chapter, but attempt to find a P. A. Buddy to work intensively with the parent on a one to one basis outside of chapter until the parent and the group feel he is ready to return. (Note: See section entitled, "The P. A. Buddy".)

This is a difficult situation for all concerned – especially the acting-out parent who is once again setting himself up for the rejection he feels he so richly deserves. To make a decision between the good of the group and the needs of one parent is not going to be an easy task. If it can be approached from the standpoint of meeting the needs of both the parent and the group, and if the group leaders make the effort to give the offending parent the feeling that he is still cared about in spite of his behavior, it can be a learning experience for all and damaging to none.

In our experience, the threat of expulsion from the chapter is usually sufficient to jolt the parent into recognizing that he has gone too far. P. A. parents feel very strongly about their chapter ties and they will usually respond positively when threatened with the loss of them.

SPECIAL NOTE

Time and space do not permit us to fully explore all the problem areas which can and do arise for group leaders of a P. A. chapter. Please – when things get sticky, but before they reach the explosive stage, call the Regional Coordinstor and have a phone conference, reversing the charges if necessary. This is what your Regional Coordinator is for.

THE PASSIVE PARENT

P. A. believes that when abuse exists in a family it is the family's problem — not just the problem of the actively abusing parent. What is not often immediately obvious is that the so-called passive parent may, in fact, play an instrumental role in setting up the other parent to be the active abuser. The passive parent usually has trouble expressing his anger openly toward others — including his children.

Since anger does not disappear into thin air it will find expression. The passive parent then becomes obliged to manipulate the other parent into expressing the anger he himself cannot express. Obviously, both parents have difficulty expressing their anger appropriately, or the active parent would not be a party to such manipulation by acting out his (and the passive parent's anger) on his children.

Both parents need help in understanding how they feed into each other's behavior patterns with the result that their children are abused. For this reason P. A. strongly urges that both parents attend chapter meetings, or if possible, and the parents prefer it, separate chapter meetings. If both parents cannot, or will not attend, it then becomes necessary to explore the marital relationship, with the attending parent, in order to help him understand the ways in which he is either manipulated into expressing the passive spouse's anger, or is himself, acting as the manipulator. This dynamic exists between couples in a "living together" situation as well as with those who are legally married and group leaders should be alert to it in any couple situation, (including homosexual relationships).

Most of the focus of attention in both the media and the literature about child abuse has been on the parent who is the active abuser. The passive parent may be in even more need of help because he is even more afraid of his own anger than the active parent. To be so fearful of the open expression of anger that it becomes necessary to manipulate another into expressing it for you is a truly difficult place to be in.

Passive parents typically have an even poorer self image, and lower self esteem than active abusers. Life has taught them that they are so worthless, their wants and needs of so little concern to others, that they must seek gratification, not by the direct expression of their own wants and needs, but by attempting to experience it vicariously through others. This is where the need to manipulate enters in. The passive parent does not experience himself as a person who 'can do', who has any control over his life and who can, by direct means, get what he wants out of life. His whole experience has taught him just the opposite so that he is forced to make the attempt to meet his needs, emotional and physical, by manipulating others, including, and especially his spouse.

The passive parent often is deceptive because so much of what he thinks and feels is hidden behind a facade of quiet, inexpressive resignation. In group, such parents often say little, or do so only when actively encouraged by the group leaders. They appear to be afraid to speak up, to voice opinions about others, or to disclose anything about themselves. It may take time and patience on the part of the Chairperson and Sponsor before the passive parent can begin to be responsive without a lot of gentle prodding.

Once the passive parent does feel comfortable, however, he may open up and reveal a personality that is quite different from that which he usually presents to the world. The manipulativeness and the anger may both surface, and group leaders need to be especially aware of the fact that they become primary targets for manipulative behavior. To be aware of it can help you to cope with it. The super-manipulator needs to know that his manipulation is recognized by others. Such a parent needs help in limiting his own behavior, otherwise he will manipulate himself right out of the group, or will manipulate the group into expressing his feelings in ways that will inevitably be destructive for the group as a whole. The manipulative parent is one who will call and say either that he is about to abuse his child or that he is about to commit suicide. What he is probably saying is that he is feeling rotten and wants somebody to give him attention and support. He is

making an effort, in the only way he knows how, to get these needs met. It can take an incredible amount of patience to work with such a parent, but if you 'hang tough' with him long enough and resist his efforts to manipulate you, you will be repaid by a parent who finally realizes that it is possible to get what he wants in this life without resorting to manipulation. In the process, this parent will become more expressive of a whole range of feelings and will begin to learn ways to deal directly with others in order to meet his needs.

In the following section, Leonard Lieber, co-founder of P. A., discusses the problem of child neglect.

NEGLECT

Neglect usually brings to mind a picture of a frail, unkempt, poorly clothed child in impoverished surroundings. It's true that physical neglect is the most common form of neglect and may be as prevalent as other forms of abuse. I think, however, that we might define both physical and emotional neglect as that behavior on the part of the adult caretaker which is insufficient to meet minimally the basic physical and emotional needs of the child.

In my work as a child welfare and protective service worker prior to the beginnings of Parents Anonymous, typical cases of child neglect were infants lying in urine-soaked diapers, barely reacting to external stimuli and showing little animation in those parts of the body that should already have been exploring the outer world. I saw sad-eyed children living in poorly lit and unheated lean-to's with insufficient nutrition and little or no medical care. I also saw school-age children who had histories of poor school attendance and performance due to retardation from malnutrition, an aspect of neglect which is receiving more and more attention these days.

An important factor in physical neglect is the extreme immaturity of neglecting parents. They are children, really infants, in the bodies of adults who received very inadequate nurturing themselves and who know very, very little about providing good care to their own children. Their "babies" are but living dolls – possessions which provide these very sad parents with some semblance of identity, fragmented though it may be.

I think it would be safe to say that physical neglect is the most difficult child abuse problem to treat. My own failings in dealing with physical neglect cases far outnumber any successes that I had, and the Parents Anonymous program does not have much of a track record working with physically neglecting parents. Because neglecting parents are so infantile when they are first met in a crisis stage, one must look forward to many years of providing nurturing to them before they are capable of providing the same to their children.

The issue of emotional neglect is often ignored and cases frequently go undetected. This is the form of abuse which plays havoc with a child's attempt to establish an identity, because he is forced to develop that identity while living in an emotional vacuum. We are referring to situations in which children receive neither positive nor negative sets of feelings from their adult caretakers; we are talking about children who literally don't know who they are or what set of feelings they generate in those around them. We've had a number of parents in the P. A. program who have talked about their childhood by mentioning that they grew up as a "nobody", referring to the fact that they really weren't sure who they were because no one ever gave them any kind of feedback. The sociological term of "looking glass self" existed for these people as though they were looking out into space, finding no reflection whatsoever.

Emotional neglect is also known by some of us as the "Beverly Hills type of abuse" in which children from very affluent families may be told by their parents that they will have access to the house, the cars, the servants, the money, etc., while the parents are off on a six-month trip to the French Riviera. The children are also told not to bother the parents with their problems so that the parents can have a "good time". What we find, then, are children growing up amidst physical things but grossly lacking in the extremely important ingredients to establish a healthy identity, namely an ongoing emotional interchange with significant others. Very often, significant others for affluent kids become other similarly neglected children who eventually find themselves sharing activities which are a form of rebellion to their parents, but which, nevertheless, give the children some identity. Perhaps we might consider the middle-class drug culture as an example.

As Leonard has pointed out in the above section, P. A. has not had overwhelming success in working with neglecting parents. This doesn't mean that parents with neglect problems should not be admitted to chapter. However, group leaders need to be aware that they need far more support than once a week chapter meetings and weekly phone contacts can offer them. Because neglecting parents are infantile, they are as badly in need of parenting and nurturing as their children. They need one-to-one daily contact with a parent surrogate, either in the form of a homemaker who can live in with them, or along the lines of the lay therapists who work with families in the modality developed by Drs. Helfer and Kempe at the University of Colorado Medical School in Denver.

Since P. A. is not presently structured to provide such intensive supportive services to neglecting parents, the best we can do at this time is to suggest that group leaders try to find resources within their communities that might be able to provide these additional services. Departments of Welfare sometimes have homemaker programs, or programs utilizing volunteers who might be available to work with parents on a daily basis. United Way/United Fund agencies can tell you what agencies in your community might provide such help.

If possible, see if you can find a volunteer to work as a P. A. Buddy (see the Manual section entitled "The P. A. Buddy"). Working with neglecting parents will require a more intense and time consuming involvement on the part of the Buddy, and this needs to be explained to the volunteer.

THE GROUP LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO AGENCIES AND OUTSIDE PROFESSIONALS

What must be made explicit is that no one functioning in the capacity of either Chairperson or Sponsor is a representative of any agency, public or private. As Chairperson or Sponsor he is a representative of P. A. solely. With this clearly in mind, it then becomes apparent that neither Chairperson nor Sponsor can put themselves in the position of acting as a reporting agent to any agency, public or private. To do so will jeopardize the group leader's relationship with the parent and the group. This cannot be stressed too strongly.

There will be times in your capacity as group leader that you will be contacted by persons working for the police, probation department, welfare department or schools. You must always remember that your parent has a right to expect that you will not violate his right to privacy and confidentiality. You must also remember that agencies involved with your parent member will place a lot of weight and importance on any information you give them about the parent. This is due to the fact that often you are the professionals' sole resource in making a judgment about the parent's progress.

P. A. places a high premium on its ability to protect the rights of parents. We therefore urge you to adopt the following recommendations when giving information to professionals and agencies about your parents:

No matter who is requesting information, and for what purpose, check with your parent first and receive his verbal approval to talk with the person requesting the information.

At the time of the initial contact with the person requesting the information, determine exactly what it is they wish to know. If the parent agrees that you may divulge the information, limit your conversation to the specific request and politely decline to be 'pumped' for anything more.

After your conversation with the person requesting the information, report the content of the the conversation back to the parent as fully as possible.

If the parent agrees, and you make any kind of written report to anyone, the parent should either see a copy beforehand or have it read to him over the phone.

If a professional or agency representative requests a conference with you in regard to the parent, please include the parent. If for some reason the parent cannot attend, or doesn't want to but still wishes you to do so, take notes and report as fully as possible to the parent.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING RETURN OF THE CHILD

This is a very difficult area for all concerned and P. A. strongly advises you to consider very carefully whether you feel you have worked with a parent long enough to make a recommendation. Please remember that P. A. is not mandated to recommend anything to anybody. No P. A. group leader should ever feel that he is under any obligation to either provide information or make a recommendation. You do so of your own free will and volition and because your parent has specifically requested you to do so. Beware of being manipulated by others – either parents or professionals.

We feel that the best way to handle this situation if you feel you have sufficient communication with the parent to warrant it, is to turn the matter over to the group. Let everyone be heard and a consensus will be reached. The group leaders should trust the judgment of the group. In this fashion such a recommendation becomes a shared responsibility and no one, or two people are set up as judge and jury.

We feel very strongly that parents should always be consulted and be a part of the decisions which affect their lives. Even when a parent disagrees with what you are reporting or recommending – especially if he disagrees – he must be apprised of your contacts with agency representatives and professionals.

If a parent tells you that he does not wish you to have any contact with any person outside P. A. requesting information about his participation in the program, you must respect his wishes. If you find yourself in a situation where you feel you require outside help and/or consultation regarding a parent you must inform him that this is what you are doing. If he still resists and you feel it is imperative if you are to continue working with him, explain your reasons in full, and as a last resort, explain that unless you can have help and consultation, it would be advisable for him to leave the group. The parent will then be the one to make the decision as to whether or not he wishes to continue as a group member. A parent will not usually resist if he clearly understands that your motive is to work more effectively with him.

If you keep in mind that your first priority in working with a parent is to foster and maintain his feeling of trust in you, and that to do so you must respect his right to privacy and his right to be a part of the decision-making processes that affect his life, you will do the right thing.

COURT-REFERRED PARENTS

As P. A. and its program become more widely known nationally, there will be an increasing number of parents who are referred to chapters by the courts. Attendance at P. A. will be increasingly a part of the court's stipulations in regard to parents' terms of probation and/or parole.

Court-referred parents are almost always either openly hostile, or very passive, but beneath the passivity is great fear, anger and resentment. The court experience is often demeaning and degrading and a kind of final proof to the parent of his own sense of worthlessness. Court-referred parents typically need to do a lot of dumping in regard to the whole experience.

As group leaders, you will need to be particularly cautious in regard to your contacts with agency people in connection with court-referred parents. Such parents often harbor the suspicion that P. A. is indeed a reporting agency and is working clandestinely with whatever court, probation or welfare agency referred them. They often believe that everything they say in chapter meeting is reported. Establishing rapport and trust with court-referred parents is difficult but not impossible. If you permit them their anger, while still giving them the message that you accept them and support them in every way possible, they will gradually come around. You may have to bend over backwards to reassure them that you are not reporting on them behind their backs. Including them in any contact you have in respect to their 'case' will help them to accept that you are acting on their behalf and will help to dispel their fears. When they see that you are really making an effort to be open and aboveboard with them in your contacts with outsiders involved in their case, it will strengthen their trust in you and make working with them much easier.

KEEPING ATTENDANCE RECORDS

P. A. does not encourage the keeping of records of any kind on chapter members. Those parents who are court-referred and request a record of their attendance to give to their social worker should devise a method of keeping attendance records on themselves with their Chairperson and/or Sponsor.

THE P. A. BUDDY

The P. A. Buddy is a volunteer, male or female, who provides especially needy P. A. parents with a warm, supportive one-to-one relationship outside of chapter.

The Chairperson and Sponsors can identify which parent in group seems to need this kind of support. Such a parent may be very passive, seemingly incapable of organizing their lives even to the extent of getting to chapter meetings, or, on the other hand may be a very hostile parent whose behavior is threatening and/or rejecting to others. In either case, the parent is in need of more support than can usually be given by the chapter alone.

SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

The Buddy should be a warm, non-judgmental person, not necessarily a parent, but definitely not a parent with abuse problems, past or present. The Buddy should be a mature and stable individual capable of being fully supportive and without any tendency to compound the problem due to his own emotional needs.

In screening volunteers for Buddies, try to gain some insight into the Buddies' family and social relationships. If the person seems to have a warm, supportive emotional environment in his own life, the chances are that he is capable of helping the P. A. parent achieve the same in his. The volunteer whose own emotional life is meager will not have much to give another, and there is the added danger that the Buddy will be using the parent for his own emotional support – a dangerous situation.

Look for people who seem to be secure about themselves and what they have to offer – if you feel comfortable with them the chances are good that the parent will, too.

Something to watch out for in interviewing prospective Buddies is volunteers who are attracted to the program because of their own need to work through an unacknowledged abuse problem. Usually this will emerge in the interview when their own relationships with their children (assuming they have children) are discussed. Be aware, too, that volunteers are sometimes 'do-gooder' Pollyanna types who feel that by working with parents they are 'saving little children'. This last type will usually verbalize something of the sort and they are not the kind of people who should be working with parents as their underluing motivation may be to punish parents.

MATCHING PARENT TO BUDDY

It is difficult to give guidelines for 'matching' Buddies to parents because the circumstances will differ according to the needs of the individual parent, and also, according to who is available to the cha, ter to serve as a Buddy. Ordinarily, a rule of thumb is to try to see that the educational, ethnic and racial backgrounds as well as general life styles of the two parties involved are not too widely divergent. Since it is hoped that the relationship will be a close, as opposed to a superficial one, the more basic similarities there are the more easily the relationship can grow. People identify most easily with those most like themselves.

THE LIMITATIONS

The question of time limitations and constraints should be explored thoroughly with the volunteer at the time of the initial screening interview. Buddies should be made aware that working with a P. A. parent can be very demanding emotionally and in terms of time. A Buddy who works during the day obviously cannot be available to the parent during working hours. If the parent is one who will obviously not be able to limit contact with his Buddy to evening hours and week-ends, then a working Buddy is a poor 'match-up'. If, on the other hand, the parent is aware that the Buddy has a particular time constraint and feels that he can manage despite the limitation and they seem to be well matched in other ways, then there is no reason not to try it. Again, the Chairperson and Sponsor are in a good position to judge the over-all needs and feasabilities of the situation. Be certain, however, whatever the limitations may be for the Buddy, that the parent is aware of these limitations before involvement.

Another matter which should be settled at the screening interview is the question of the duration of the relationship. If the volunteer can only be available to serve as a Buddy for six months, or a year, this fact should be made known to the parent before the Buddy is assigned. In this way, parents do not have the expectation that the Buddy's involvement with them is of unlimited duration. It can also serve as a motivating factor to get the parent to make the maximum growth during the period of time the Buddy is available to him.

SUPERVISING THE BUDDY

The Buddy should work in close cooperation with both the Chairperson and Sponsor, meeting with them at least once a week to discuss problems. Buddies will also be in need of support and the opportunity to work through their own feelings in relation to the parent. They will need support, advice and reassurances and the Chairperson and Sponsor should be prepared to provide all three. The Chairperson and Sponsor will have additional insights and understanding of the parent from working with him in group and seeing him function in the group setting, and the Buddy will have a background on the parent's home life and situation that the Chairperson and Sponsor may not have. The exchange of insights and information is entirely appropriate EXCEPT when the Buddy has information about the parent that the parent does not wish divulged to the group leaders. This can put the Buddy in a difficult position, but our recommendation is to respect the parent's wishes in this regard or the Buddy will jeopardize his relationship with the parent. Unless the information bears on the health and safety of another individual, adult or child, what ever is known to the Buddy that the parent wishes to be treated as confidential should be treated as such. It is essential that the parent believe he can trust his Buddy implicitly, otherwise a truly close relationship will not be possible.

BUDDY ATTENDANCE AT CHAPTER MEETINGS

We do not recommend the Buddy's attendance at chapter meetings for the following reasons:

Other members may resent the fact that one parent is special enough to warrant having a Buddy.

Members may simply resent the intrusion of one they feel is an 'outsider'.

Parents sometimes attempt to play their Buddy off against either the Chairperson or Sponsor or both, and this can get very sticky.

Unless the parent himself specifically requests that the Buddy be permitted to attend chapter meetings, and unless all members agree that the Buddy may attend, we feel it is inadvisable. If the Buddy does attend however, it is with the understanding that he may participate in the meeting.

ACTIVITIES OF THE P. A. BUDDY

Essentially the P. A. Buddy is a friend to the P. A. parent. The kinds of activities that give people pleasure, whether it be joint involvement in sports or some entertainment, shopping or merely coffee-klatching are appropriate for the Buddy. The needs and capacities of the individual parent will structure the parent-Buddy relationship. For a very passive parent who leads an isolated withdrawn existence a drop-in visit once a day so the parent can have another adult to relate to may be what is required. As this parent begins to feel better about himself, becomes more assertive and begins to reach out, the Buddy may suggest some simple activity such as taking the parent and children for a car drive, to a park or beach. Isolated parents are often fearful of social contacts in any new or strange situation and they should not be pushed.

For another parent for whom the weekly grocery shopping expedition with the children is a traumatic experience, having the Buddy accompany them to the store to help with the kids and just be there if needed would be a meaningful activity.

Whatever special interests, talents or abilities the Buddy possesses can and should be shared with the P. A. parent, if that seems appropriate. A Buddy who happened to be a really good cook, adept at making pottery, skilled in needlepoint, good at tennis or bowling, could, if he felt so inclined, attempt to interest the parent

in such an activity. However, because so many P. A. parents feel themselves to be inadequate and ineffectual human beings, the introduction of such activities should come after a strong relationship has been established for only in this way will the P. A. parent feel secure enough with his Buddy to run the risk of failing, yet again, at something he attempts to do.

Until such a relationship is established, the focus of contact should be primarily on getting to know, like and trust each other and this can best be accomplished by the Buddy's involvement in the day-to-day realities of the parent's existance. Stopping by just to visit, or to take the parent shopping or help with a doctor's appointment for the children are the kinds of activities that provide support to the parent as well as the kind of shared experience that will foster friendship.

PARENT MANIPULATION

P. A. parents are often very needy people and to have someone available to them more or less on a contingency basis can affect them like the proverbial kid in the candy store – they will attempt to glut themselves on a good thing. The Chairperson and Sponsor, as well as the Buddy, need to be aware of this and to take precautions that the parent does not misuse his Buddy. If it appears that this is happening, it will be necessary for all parties to sit down and talk it out. The parent will be angry at what to him appears to be the withdrawal of concern and support of the Buddy, but to give in to the parent's neediness to the extent of permitting him to misuse and/or abuse the relationship is to permit the parent an unhealthy kind of manipulation. Be firm with the parent in helping him to set limits on his use of his Buddy. Learning that he can function on his own without constant support and nurturing is necessary if parents are to grow and mature in the P. A. experience.

CRISIS INTERVENTION HOME CALLS

At some point in his contact with a P. A. parent, the Buddy may be called on to make a crisis home call. If this is necessary and the Buddy feels in any way threatened or compromised, he should request that either the Chairperson or Sponsor accompany him to the parent's home. If neither the Chairperson or Sponsor is available then another group member should go along.

NOTE: An application form for the P. A. Buddy appears at the back of this manual.

Reg. Coordinators (l-r), Jill Mauch and Cassie Starkweather.

(l-r), Board Member, Roland Summit, Board Pres., Jean Matusinka, Dir. of Training, Margot Fritz.

(l-r). Board Member, Helen Boardman, Reg. Coord's. Jean Hartgrave, Ron Nelson, Board Members, Gerry Tarlow, Gary Faber, Roland Summit, Reg. Coord., Dianna Kirkpatrick, Board Pres. Jean Matusinka.

Jolly K., Dir. of Prog., and Carol Johnston, of Parental Stress.

Board Members, (l-r), Gerry Tarlow, Gary Faber, Roland Summit, Leigh Colitre, Margot Fritz, Dir. of Training; Dianna Kirkpatrick, Reg. Coord; Jean Matusinka, Pres. of Bd. of Dir.

Newlyweds – Board Pres., Jean Matusinka and Board Member, Dave Lytle.

MAINTAINING THE CHAPTER

Almost all chapters face the problem of the need to generate new referrals and even those fortunate few that are swamped with referrals will probably, at some point in their history, need to turn their attention to this problem.

The questionnaire done on existing chapters in May, 1974, showed that the primary resources for referrals were: Department of Social Services (primarily Child Protective Services); Public Health and word-of-mouth.

Media Coverage of the subject of child abuse, plus the focus of media attention on Jolly K., has helped significantly in the area of word-of-mouth referrals. For this reason it is highly desirable for a chapter to make efforts on its own to direct media attention to the fact that a P. A. chapter exists in the community. A strong parent member who does not mind disclosing his problem to the media can be most effective in gaining the media's interest. Care should be taken however, that no parent is ever placed in the position of feeling that such disclosure is expected. Working with the media should be clearly at the option of the individual parent. Whenever possible the Chairperson and/or Sponsor should contact the news media personally, explain the nature of the program and request media coverage to familiarize the community with P. A. The whole issue of child abuse is now a national priority, and on the whole the media has been most cooperative about providing coverage. (See the Chapter Development Manual for sample press releases, news stories, posters, tips on writing copy for newspapers, etc.)

PUBLIC SPEAKING

If a parent can be found in the Chapter who is willing to do some public speaking to professionals and community groups, this can be a very effective way of heightening public awareness of the problem as well as generating new referrals. The professional Sponsor, who already has ties in the professional community, can be instrumental in putting the parent speaker in touch with the right people. The parent can speak of his own personal experience, or he can talk exclusively about P. A. and its program. For the most part, however, experience has shown that the most effective tool any parent has in working with the public is his personal experience, and almost uniformly, people react with warmth and caring for the parent who can openly express to others what the pain of an abuse problem is all about.

There are many community groups and agencies currently expressing a desire for more information about the problem of abuse such as: colleges and universities, hospitals, P. T. A. and other parent groups, Head Start Centers, churches, training sessions for D. P. W. social workers and so on. Once it becomes known that there is a parent in the community who is active in P. A. and willing to speak to groups, there will be plenty of requests.

Once the demand becomes fairly frequent for speakers, there is no reason why the chapter should not form a speaker's bureau and request an honorarium or fees as compensation for providing a speaker. The honorarium may be retained by the individual parent if he so chooses, or turned over to the chapter for use by the group as a whole.

The Sponsor can also be utilized as a speaker if he is willing, and ideally, both parent and Sponsor can do presentations. In fact, the parent just getting his feet wet with public speaking may well require the support of his Sponsor when he first gets started.

The Sponsor, Chairperson, and parents, can be effective in another way as well. Many communities are now beginning to form Task Force committees to deal with the problem of abuse. Some of these committees consist of concerned professionals, others are agency affiliated. The Sponsor may receive requests to serve on such committees or boards. Whenever possible the Sponsor should request that a parent from their chapter be included as a working member of the committee. This does two things: first it provides professionals with valuable input from the population to be served (parents) and second, it is a growth experience for any parent. By becoming involved with the professional community, by being 'on the scene' to discover how the wheels turn (or fail to turn) in the establishment, parents become more assertive, more responsible, and more knowledgeable. Involvement also serves to alleviate their sense of helplessness. It helps them to stop viewing themselves as mere victims of circumstance and to begin thinking of themselves as persons who can actively help shape the important decisions that affect their lives. This is, of course, also true of parents who undertake public speaking.

POSTERS AND PAMPHLETS

By the Summer of 1975 the National Office will be in a position to provide: posters, public information pamphlets and brochures describing the P. A. program. These will be available to all chapters and can be utilized by the chapter as a means of generating new referrals. Posters placed in strategic places where parents will see them, together with the pamphlets, should help to keep the public aware of the existence of your chapter and give parents the information they need to make that first contact.

To sum up: There are things you can and should be doing to maintain your chapter. The more involved you become with your community, the more contacts you make with professionals and agencies, the more P. A. will be utilized by many factions within the community as a resource for the treatment of child abuse. But most important – it will provide parents and Sponsors with an opportunity to further their own personal growth.

STATEMENT ON STATE AND FEDERAL TAX EXEMPT STATUS

In order for a chapter to raise funds as a charitable organization within its state, it is necessary to incorporate as a non-profit, charitable organization. In order to do this a chapter will need the advice and services of an attorney. An attorney interested in the P. A. program can probably be found who would be willing to donate his services. Such services would be considered as a charitable donation once the state incorporation as a non-profit charitable organization was finalized. Incorporation as a charitable organization within your state means that individuals and/or organizations may claim financial contributions as charitable donations on their state income tax. It also means that your chapter need not pay any state taxes.

Fund raising has been, and will continue to be of importance to chapters. It is anticipated that our Regional Coordinators will be involved, together with the state/regional organizations they develop, in assisting chapters in fund-raising.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF SERVICE AND ACTIVITY

In addition to the tasks which group leaders perform in their roles as Chairperson and Sponsor there are other kinds of involvements in working with parents.

Parents who are referred to a chapter through the courts or Department of Welfare will need support and assistance in dealing with both. No P. A. parent should ever have to attend a court hearing alone. As group leaders you should determine in advance with court referred parents when their next hearing is set and, if the parent(s) request it, they should be accompanied by one or both group leaders or another member of the group. The court experience is often a demeaning one for parents, one that generates tremendous anger which is only intensified if the parent(s) must face it alone. It has been our experience, too, that judges and juvenile court commissioners are invariably impressed when a parent is accompanied by P. A. representatives and the attitude on the part of the court can be significantly altered in favor of the parent.

Whether this is the case or not, the parent will certainly feel better knowing he has support. It is also helpful because it will give you perspective on what happens in court so that you can help the parent deal realistically with his feelings. Parents are often so upset by what they experience in court that it becomes distorted in their minds and they may be unable to distinguish between the reality and their own fantasy of what happened. Being on the scene gives you information which can help the parent.

AGENCIES

Some P. A. parents come from the lower end of the economic spectrum and are in need of help in finding and obtaining services in the areas of health, housing, employment. We do not ask that group leaders perform the job of social workers, but you can be helpful in putting parents in touch with their community resources.

The Sponsor, who often has contacts in the professional community, can serve as a facilitator for the parent seeking services and it is entirely appropriate that the Sponsor use his influence in this fashion. If a parent expresses great reluctance or anxiety about dealing with a particular agency, it may be necessary for the Chairperson or Sponsor to accompany him. Large bureaucracies can be intimidating even to reasonably sophisticated people; they are often literally terrifying to someone with little or no experience in dealing with them.

If a parent is having problems with his child in school and the teacher or a school administrator requests an interview, the parent may request the Chairperson or Sponsor to attend the conference with him. There is no reason why you should not do so and you may gain helpful insight by doing so.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Some P. A. chapters have already planned and held group activities and when we receive reports of such events they are invariably seen as a positive experience. Picnics, a day at the beach or a trip to a particular recreational facility can be just plain fun.

We would like to request that any activity planned include all chapter members and not just a few. Exclusiveness is not encouraged in P. A. Children of P. A. parents can and should attend such activities if the parents desire that they should.

Some Sponsors have questioned whether or not it is appropriate for them to be involved in social activities with their group members. This is entirely up to the Sponsor and should only be undertaken if he himself is comfortable doing so.

APPLICATION FOR P.A.BUDDY

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Date: _____

Name: _____ Sex: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____ Tel. No.: _____
No., Street and Apt. No.

_____ Area Code: _____
City, State, and Zip

Marital Status:
(check only one) 1. _____ Single 2. _____ Married 3. _____ Divorced, Separated, or Widowed

_____ Date of Marriage:

Number of Children: Boys: _____ Ages: _____

Girls: _____ Ages: _____

Other Family Commitments: _____

_____

Education: High School: 1 Yr. _____ College: 1 Yr. _____

2 Yrs. _____ 2 Yrs. _____

3 Yrs. _____ 3 Yrs. _____

4 Yrs. _____ 4 Yrs. _____

Graduate School _____

Other Training: _____

Occupation: _____

Work Address: _____ Tel. No. _____

_____ Hours: _____

What are your hobbies and/or interests: _____

_____

_____

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION (Continued)

What experiences have you had, if any, which might be helpful to you in relating to our P. A. program?

Would you please describe your reasons for volunteering in P. A. program, and also how much of yourself and your time you are able to give to this program:

Have you ever participated in any type of individual or group counseling or therapy? Please describe: